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Ardent Adrienne

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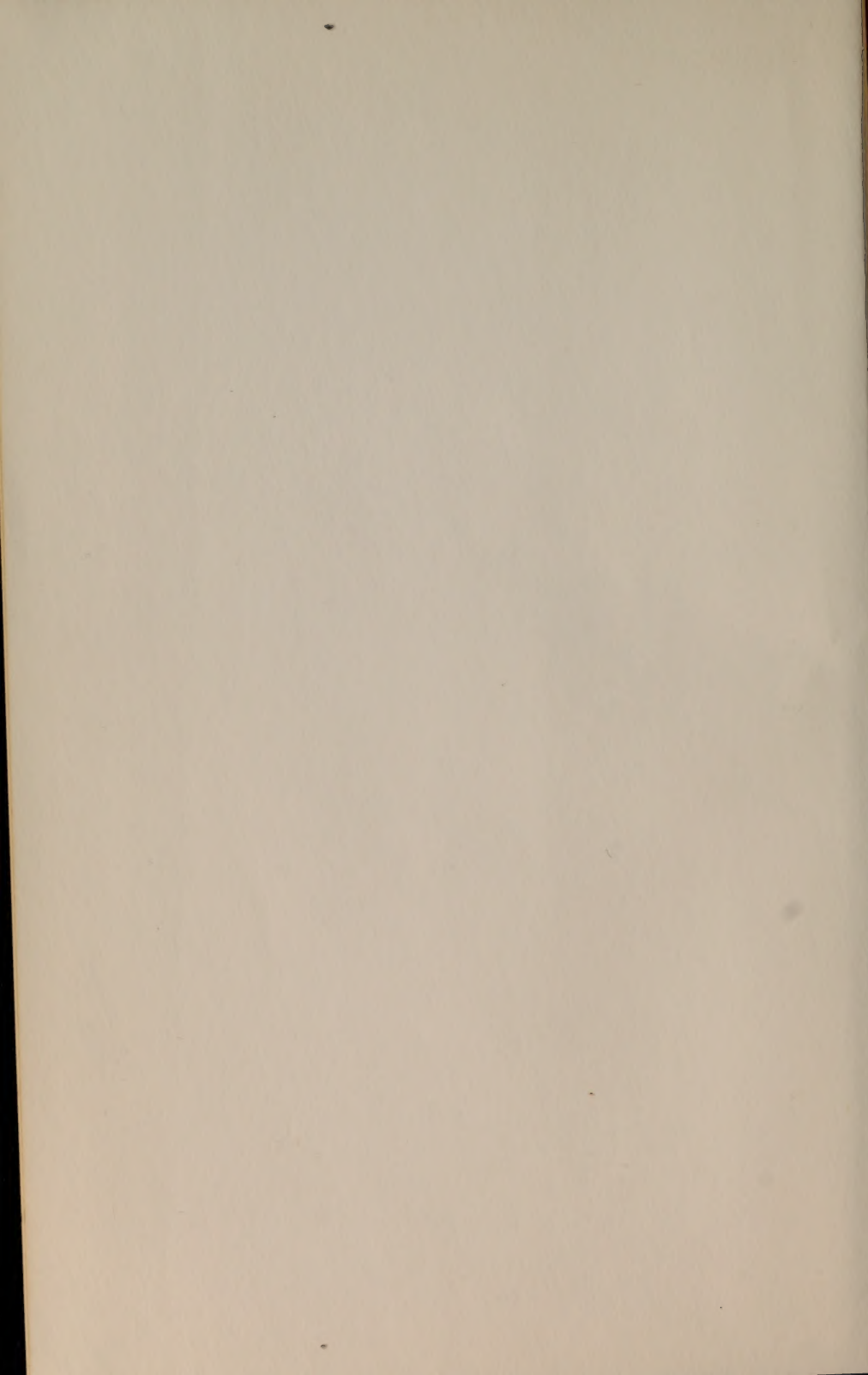
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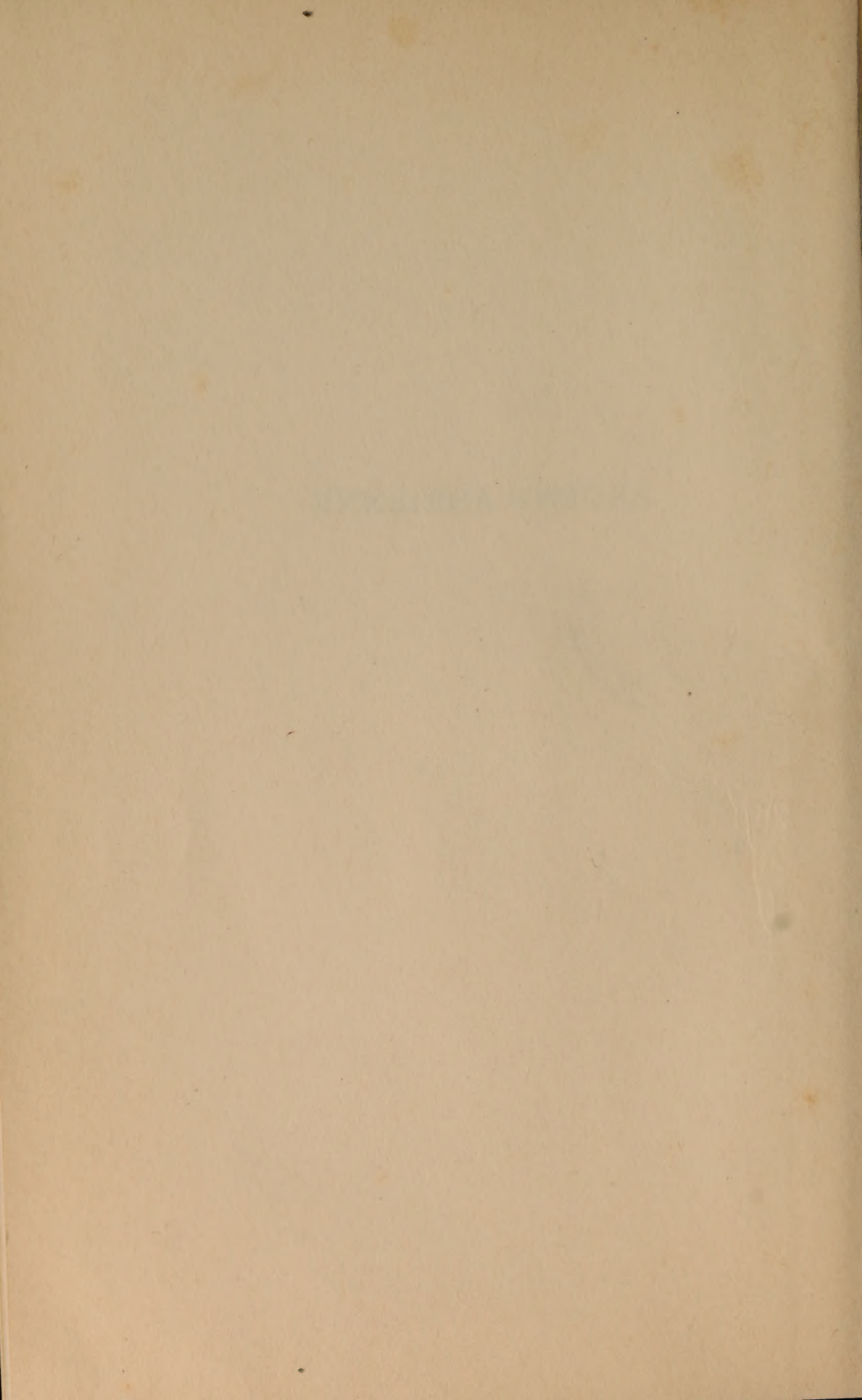
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ARDENT ADRIENNE







*Photograph by Giraudon*

ADRIENNE DE NOAILLES AT THE TIME  
OF HER MARRIAGE

FROM A MINIATURE IN THE POSSESSION OF COUNT DE  
REMUSAT, BELIEVED TO BE A DUPLICATE OF THE MINIATURE  
BURIED WITH LA FAYETTE



# ARDENT ADRIENNE

THE LIFE OF MADAME DE LA FAYETTE

By

LIDA ROSE McCABE



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D. APPLETON AND COMPANY  
NEW YORK ♪ LONDON ♪ MCMXXX

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*In memoriam*  
SEDDIE B. ASPELL

*"They have always lived fullest who  
have loved best."*



## FOREWORD

Here is a spiritual force that never keyed down to the level of its time; a woman whose every act was largely motivated by the sense of duty—the duty of rebellion no less than of acquiescence.

Although she loomed large in the romance and adventure, the drama and the tragedy of the greatest social upheaval—up to World War—her life has failed in popular appeal to the imagination.

More than a generation ago, an English biographer, M. MacDermott Crawford, wrote: "The memory of Adrienne de Noailles must always live in the hearts of those who now a great nation were only a band of struggling patriots, when La Fayette espoused their Cause. Woman-like she loved that Cause because him she loved loved it."

Adrienne de Noailles was then (1907) not only wholly forgotten, but it is doubtful if ever she was known to the rank and file of the "struggling patriots" or is known to their descendants. As for the "great nation" now grown to dominate world power, it is equally doubtful if it ever heard of Adrienne de Noailles' sacrifice to the Cause, not wholly as the English biographer states "because him she loved loved it"; but rather as facts substantiate, because hers were the judicial mind, the rare sense of justice illumined and sustained by a Faith "the world cannot give nor take away."

In short, we believe, Adrienne de Noailles was des-

## FOREWORD

tined from æons for the part she consummately played in the founding of the American Republic.

In the 123 years since her passing, at the age of forty-eight, historians and biographers are wont to dismiss her "a heroine of conjugal piety" or the parrot echo of the consuming passion of her stormy life—the hero whose immortality is inseparable from a "famous white horse mounted to the music of popular applause."

However just or unjust the appraisal, it is high time that Adrienne de Noailles stood upon her own feet. That they were far from feet of clay is obvious. Here, at any rate, as I see and feel it was lived, is the life of an uncompromising champion of America's liberty in its darkest hour.

If it leaves you "more kindly, more generous, morally better than before reading it," it will not be for you "just another book."

L. R. Mc.

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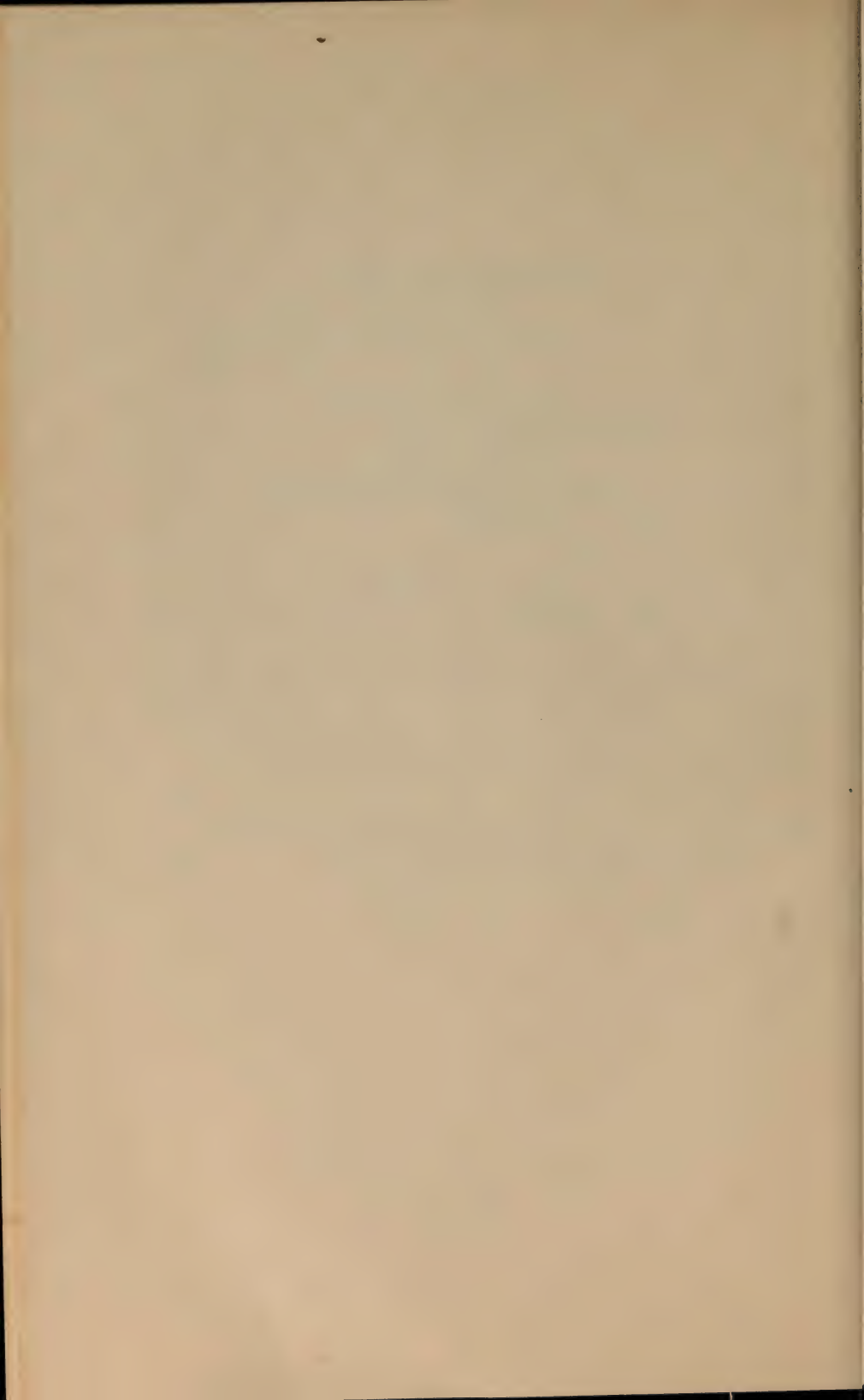
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## CHAPTER I

### EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

**E**IGHTEENTH century France! Amazing panorama of beauty, art and charm; philosophy, sophistry, chicanery; science and chimera, belief and unbelief, cruelty, barbarity, inhumanity and—beneficence! Wipe it out of the cycle of the ages, would we have the America of to-day?

That it was the Colonists' Declaration of Independence that precipitated the climax of its last decade is conceded from the fall of the Bastille to this day of uncrowned kings and vanished thrones. The Declaration not only fired the youth of France—the flower of its aristocracy—with the fundamentals of democracy, but brought across seas its arms and men, its ships and money to fight, bleed and die with the Colonists that Liberty might live and all men be free.

The modern mind has become so steeped in the blood of the Terror, the unbridled lust for power of its master minds—the Dantons, Marats, Robespierres—that it is prone to overlook or underestimate how the Revolution, its horrors aside, did “establish for all citizens personal liberty, right of property and right of personal safety,” up to then governmentally unknown, save in the newly born American Republic.

Likewise is the modern conscience dulled to just evaluation of that inarticulate minority that originated and advocated for a generation the basic reforms the Constitutional Assembly achieved; the aristocracy that

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labored on its great inherited estates to better the condition of a peasantry ground to the dust—as the most enlightened recognized—by centuries of feudal oppression. As for the “bone and sinew” back of the nations’ firing line, the bourgeoisie and the peasant that fearlessly voiced and courageously lived the inherited Faith, decried the black sheep of the fold, suffered and died in the spirit of the Martyrs—all are the “fade-outs” of erudite or popular chroniclers.

From the highest and most enlightened of the aristocracy, the uncompromising patriots that united the best of the *ancien régime* with the ideals of the new order, came Adrienne de Noailles, better known as Madame de La Fayette, wife of America’s immortal General. Eighteenth century France was blithely forging to the zenith of its “luxury, profligacy and wit” when her eyes opened, November 21, 1759, to the multi-colored web of a destiny long on the loom.

The infant lay far beyond the allotted time on the immense crimson and gold brocaded nuptial bed of the Hôtel de Noailles. The devoted young mother was loath to release to the nurses this third fruit of her womb, baptized in the family chapel, “sumptuous as a King’s oratory,” Adrienne-Françoise-Henriette de Noailles.

The Duchesse d’Ayen clung as tenaciously to her Adrienne as she had to the first born—a son who died in infancy—or to his successor, Louise (the Vicomtesse de Noailles), whose tragic fate was inseparable from her own; for, as Adrienne wrote, years after in the prison of Olmütz, “God made her to be a mother.”

Five daughters were the Duchesse’s contribution to the House of Noailles. Before their marriages they were called: Mademoiselle de Noailles (Louise), Mademoi-



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selle d'Ayen (Adrienne), Mademoiselle d'Epernon (Clotilde), Mademoiselle de Maintenon (Pauline) and Mademoiselle de Montclar (Rosalie). Contrary to the custom of the noblesse the Duchesse devoted her life to their care and education. Her chief legacy to them was the soul culture so rare in the curriculum of modern youth.

Of the five daughters, four of whom were remarkable, Adrienne was the most intellectual, vivacious, intense. The Duchesse early perceived her superior mentality—not unlike her own—and spared no pains to equip her for the career she divined awaited her. "Without cease she led my too vivid imagination to the true and the simple," writes the Adrienne of maturity. "She might have been a little too free, perhaps, in letting me see her appreciation of me as a child, but she knew how to correct my pride and conceit by disclosing my faults in a manner so true, so vivid, that each time she would strike my heart to its inmost core."

A solid mind, a great soul, a remarkable woman was the Duchesse d'Ayen. "Conscience, sober sense, impatience, spiritual fervor" were mixed in her with inhibitions, prohibitions, contradictions, to pique, if not wholly confound, the modern psychologist.

The Duchesse was the granddaughter of the famous Chancellor of France, Henri d'Aguesseau. Her father, Monsieur de Fresnes, was equerry to Louis XV. Three days after her birth, she lost her mother, Anne-Louise-Henriette Dupré, the dame of La Grange of Bleneau in Brie. This fortress-château dates from the first crusade. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, as the home of General de La Fayette, it was the mecca of American travelers.

At the age of three years, Anne-Louise-Henriette

de Fresnes passed from nurses to the convent of the Visitation of Saint Denis, the order founded by Saint Francis de Salle. There for eleven years she was the exclusive charge of Madame d'Haricourt, a nun of the community. Convents at this skeptical period were the only repositories of faith; the only schools of polite breeding. Much of the flower of the *ancienne noblesse* were of the religieuse. Madame d'Haricourt had a distinguished mind, a "tender heart and a firm will that made virtue charming." Primarily, she was a born teacher as in turn was her precocious charge. Anne, at the age of five, read the Lives of the Saints, and, fearful of martyrdom, decided that she did not want to be one. She preferred austerity to asceticism, and at fourteen went from the convent to her father's Paris house. There she found a stepmother to whom she became tenderly attached. Madame d'Haricourt was replaced by a companion governess, Mademoiselle Aufroy, who devotedly shared Anne's after life. The celebrated curé of Saint Paul directed her studies, both religious and secular. "From earliest years to seek God and His justice was her first affair," Adrienne tells us. "None of the littleness of the convent entered into her piety, but a scrupulous fidelity to her duty was its basis."

Life in this convent-like home was far from gay; indeed, it was quite a serious affair. The stepmother was something of a recluse. She avoided Versailles and its Madame du Barry and the Paris salons of the beau monde. There were little or no distractions for the *jeune fille*, but her youth and gaiety were irrepressible. Nevertheless, very real, very serious were the impressions she received. Her questioning mind was not to be lulled, and in every new subject or object encountered she had vivid pleasure. About her eighteenth birthday

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—unusually tardy—came the inevitable Prince Charming in the guise of the gay and witty Duc d'Ayen. He was two years her junior, already skilled in arms and marked for the distinction he subsequently achieved in war, science, philosophy, and the gay world of Court and Camp.

The Duc d'Aÿen was the only son of the last Maréchal de Noailles of that name (the family gave France six Field Marshals) and upon his father's death in 1792 he became the Duc de Noailles.

Curiously, the pious girl's austere parents did not regard the worldly sixteen-year-old Duc, enamored of Voltaire and Rousseau, irreligious. And so they were married with all the pomp of Church and State. After the manner of the time, they went to Hôtel de Noailles to live en famille with the second Maréchal de Noailles and his son, the Duc's father, his eccentric wife, the Maréchale de Noailles, and their daughters, the famous Comtesse de Tessé, who labored twenty years to give France a Constitution like America, the saintly Duchesse de Lesparre, and their husbands.



## CHAPTER II

### THE DUCHESSE'S KINGDOM

**H**ÔTEL DE NOAILLES was No. 451 rue Saint-Honoré. It stood opposite the Tuileries, about where the rue d'Alger of to-day runs into rue de Rivoli. The quarter of Saint-Honoré then covered the area which now extends from the boulevards to rue de Rivoli and from avenue de l'Opéra to rue Royale. It was largely of the fields and gardens of convents and monasteries. Of the few surviving traces of the religious occupations of the quarter are the church and parts of the original convent of the Filles de l'Assomption, both dating from 1670. They continue to stand at the corner of rue Saint-Honoré and rue Cambon, opposite the famous Café Voisin. This last fortress of the ancient régime (one night it dined three kings unaware of each other's presence) recently gave way to modern progress. Hôtel de Noailles itself has long since vanished save the grand staircase and Salle des Armes now of Hôtels St. James and d'Albany, No. 211 rue Saint-Honoré.

The original gardens extended to the Orangerie of the Tuileries. Adjoining and facing rue Saint-Honoré was the picturesque, rambling convent of the Capuchin, the famous Feuillants of sumptuous gardens and unlimited wealth. The quarter, a century before Adrienne's birth, had great stretches of unoccupied ground. On one of these waste lands rose in 1672, after the plan of Messire Jean Marot, a princely house. It was

## THE DUCHESSE'S KINGDOM

screened from pedestrians by a high impenetrable wall. Its owner was the Comtesse de Foix, kin of the illustrious Gaston. The property extended from the present rue d'Alger to rue Saint-Roche—a distance of six to seven hundred and fifty feet—to the Tuileries gardens, where it crossed rue de Rivoli, which, like rue d'Alger, was then undreamed of.

The Hôtel had a *cour d'honneur*, a *basse-cour* (stables or backyard), an interior court, a *salle des gardes*, a *salle de dais*, restricted to houses of greatest pretensions, an *antichambre des valets de chambre* and a *salle à manger* for the officers. Besides formal quarters, there were ordinary living rooms and apartments on an equal scale of magnificence. The Hôtel was wider, longer and in every detail ten times as magnificent as the Palace d'Elysée, originally designed for the Pompadour, and to-day the official home of the Presidents of the Republic of France.

It was virtually a small village. The Hôtel turned to rue Saint-Honoré a plain, ugly front, while reserved to the beautiful gardens was a façade of surpassing charm. From the center, great white marble steps swept into gardens lost in a forest so spacious that a subsequent owner observed Saint Hubert's fête there with a fox hunt. From the Hôtel wall the gardens skirted the Orangerie of the Tuileries to the banks of the Seine.

Hôtel de Foix, and its subsequent occupants, passed through many vicissitudes before it came in 1711 into the possession of the Duc de Noailles, Adrienne's great-grandfather. Of all its owners this family was the most illustrious, and it remained in their possession for more than a hundred years. The picture gallery was famous; the chapel sumptuous. The stables often sheltered half a regiment. Besides Hôtel de Noailles proper, the gar-



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den walls enclosed a petit Hôtel de Noailles. This structure was as large as the modern Paris house of five or six apartments.

To the unworldly Duchesse d'Ayen, direct from the austere simplicity of her father's house, the splendor of Hôtel de Noailles was in no wise disconcerting. The immense fortune she inherited from her maternal grandfather had filled her with a disquietude incomprehensible to the modern woman. Of great wealth she ever had great fear, and married she lost no time in diminishing, through charitable benefactions, much of her inheritance. Her sense of fitness recognized that the splendor of Hôtel de Noailles was essential to the unrivaled State offices and the fabulous revenues of the family to whose star her chariot was irrevocably hitched. Was not John Adams told that their annual revenues from the Crown was "eighteen million livres"? The Duchesse promptly dismissed the luxurious Hôtel from her consciousness, but the individuals it housed were not so easily disposed of. . . .

As Mademoiselle de Fresnes she had been presented to the Court of Versailles, Louis XV. It was her first touch with the stately, witty, corrupt society, blindly paving the way to its own and France's undoing. Court life had no real attraction for her, and, after marriage, her curiosity appeased, she early withdrew to the less artificial and ceremonious, but scarcely less colorful, life of the Hôtel de Noailles. In adjusting herself to its tribal-like customs and getting acquainted with new relatives, hers was excitement enough. She found it a continuous serial drama in which the Comtesse de Tessé and the Duchesse de Lesparre were "leads," with the eccentric Maréchale de Noailles always "in the wings." Never perhaps had a bride sisters-in-law more anti-

## THE DUCHESS'S KINGDOM

thetical. Delicate of feature, all grace and gentleness was the Duchesse de Lesparre; aristocrat to the core, an amiable devotee. "There was no agitation," Adrienne writes, "that did not grow calm, no sort of tribulation which was not softened and for which one did not gain a little strength when one had spent a short time with the Duchesse de Lesparre. It was not so much her mind as her soul that illumined her, yet one always found new lights in her company."

As for the dominant Comtesse de Tessé, hers were a grimacing mouth, strong features disfigured by small-pox pits, small piercing eyes and an imposing carriage. Her heretical religious opinions barred the Duchesse d'Ayen from that "intimacy which can give friendship all its charm, all its usefulness." The Comtesse was the intimate of Madame de Staël and the friend of Gouverneur Morris. A free-thinker and friend of Voltaire, her world was of wits and scholars; its one unpardonable sin dullness. No new thought was too daring, too impious for the Comtesse's salon.

At this period of her adjustment, it was not given the unworldly young bride to foresee how the brainy, warm-hearted Comtesse de Tessé was to be the unfailing succor of her children and grandchildren.

For long the eccentric Maréchale caused the young bride secret laughter, for the Maréchale's piety took the dubious form of religious kleptomania. She couldn't keep her hands off sacred things. It took all the Noailles influence, the Duchesse d'Ayen learned, to keep her mother-in-law from being excommunicated when she stole the arm of Saint Genevieve from a nun's chapel, powdered and dissolved it in medicine to cure the infant Duc d'Ayen of scarlet fever! Of all her vagaries her correspondence with the Blessed Virgin was the most

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amusing to the Duchesse. She was wont to post her letters in a dove cote in the Hôtel de Noailles gardens. She never suspected it was the family chaplain who answered them. "With what familiarity," she was overheard to exclaim on reading one of the chaplain's letters, "the little bourgeoise of Nazareth addresses me: 'Chère Maréchale de la troisième ligne,' but I must remember she is my Saviour's mother." Her head bowed reverently. "After all," she concluded, "she does come of the Royal House of David."

This was the environment of uncommon personalities, opposing beliefs and complicated issues in which the Duchesse d'Ayen within two years of her wedding day came into her life work—motherhood. And Adrienne's mentality matured with the tolerance that tempered her career.

## CHAPTER III

### BENDING ANCESTRAL TWIGS

THE Duchesse's daughters were not educated in convents after the manner of their mother and the custom of the old régime. Why? It is nowhere explained. Certainly convents were never so attractive as in eighteenth century France. Nothing quite like them obtained in preceding or subsequent centuries. The ruling powers were women of noble birth, charm and distinction. They were known as abbesses. The teaching nuns under their jurisdiction were also largely of the noblesse. They retained their family names and were called "Madame" instead of "Sister" as in later times. The religious vow did not cut them off from social contacts. The Abbess occupied an apartment separate from the community. Not a few maintained salons where philosophers, wits and Princes of the Church met women of *esprit* to exchange bons mots, thrash out current issues or enlist their delicate diplomacy in forwarding at Court a desired measure, law or decree. Several convents rented suites to impoverished, bereft or afflicted gentlewomen of the old régime, like Madame du Deffand, whose latter days were lived in Saint-Joseph convent, rue Saint-Dominique. Ten years before the birth of the Duchesse d'Ayen, the famous cynic took up her abode there; but it was not until six years later, when she was totally blind, that the unrivaled brilliancy of Salon Saint-Joseph was celebrated throughout Europe. The salon was the natural milieu of its hostess. It exhaled the aris-



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tocracy of birth, intellect and books. Was it not from the Saint-Joseph convent that the seventy-year-old woman's passionate love letters went to Horace Walpole?

The children committed to the Abbess' care, Madame de Genlis relates, had balls and fêtes, in which frequenters of the convent salons participated. Madame de Genlis lived in a pavilion of the convent of Belle-Chasse at the end of rue de Belle-Chasse in rue Saint-Dominique. There the famous governess of the children of the despicable Duc d'Orléans gave weekly dancing parties. In these delightful contacts the *jeunes filles* early acquired skill in the minuet, the ease and grace of the beau monde, the basis of whose manners was unfailing kindness and consideration for others.

Whatever the Duchesse d'Ayen's estimate of the prevalent convent training, she kept her daughters under the family roof. She was not alone in this, for many families of the old noblesse employed governesses and tutors for their children, engaging the singing, dancing and fencing masters of the Court to put on the finishing touches in the privacy of the home. But no woman of the old régime had such direct personal supervision of her children's education as the Duchesse d'Ayen.

Psychology, a term glibly overworked in to-day's parlance, was not of the Duchesse's vocabulary. Was it in the dictionary of the eighteenth century French Academy? That she anticipated it as an efficacious factor in education, the lives of her daughters demonstrate. The theory, method—rather lack of either—she employed embodied not only the basis of what modern psychology claims as its very own, but much that continues to escape it. Never, perhaps, had a modern psychologist so fertile or diverse a soil upon which to whet



## BENDING ANCESTRAL TWIGS

theory for tangible results as had the Duchesse in the education of her daughters, so alike, so different *au fond*. She studied each child from infancy to womanhood. Individual weaknesses and strength, inhibitions, implications were corrected or eradicated as discerned. Each was heartened by precept, example and discussion to the development of the best that was hers by nature.

So closely were the children bound in love, sympathy and understanding; so great was their admiration for each other that it would have been "idolatry were it not for the humility with which they selected defects for correction, reserving only the admirable in each for praise and emulation." Indeed, so strongly rooted was this habit of childhood, that meeting as *émigrées* on foreign soil, after years of heart-breaking tragedies, no sooner were tears dried than the three surviving sisters fell to checking up each others' faults and virtues as they came through the crucible of the Revolution. Adrienne, it was the consensus of Pauline and Rosalie, fell short. She was charged with what no one since or before ever discovered in her—a too strong inclination to worldliness! Their childhood training stamped the sisters in maturity with a greater resemblance to each other than nature gave them.

The Duchesse d'Ayen followed every movement of her children without seeming to. She never claimed as a right, but invited as a courtesy, each child's confidence, and never was it misunderstood or betrayed. While she left much of the elemental training to her old companion governess, Mademoiselle Aufroy, she personally planned and directed the whole, achieving results largely through conversation and disputation. The day began with a kiss to each child, then she was off to mass at

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the parish church, Saint-Roche, opposite Hôtel de Noailles. Evidently the latter's "sumptuous chapel" was at this time without a chaplain.

Adrienne and Louise, the eldest, were separated from the three younger in the elementary recitations. They learned the little catechism by heart; geography from cards; Rollin's *Ancient History* with maps. They were live, mischievous, daring twigs and Mademoiselle Aufroy had her hands full to maintain order. Often they could hardly wait for three o'clock, the magic hour when they dined with their mother, incidentally acquiring the table manners, the etiquette inseparable from the well-bred French child. From the stately dining-room with ancestral plate and liveried servants, they were off to the gold and crimson brocade bedroom where each had first seen light of day. The Duchesse would sit in the great Louis XIV fauteuil, with snuff box, knitting needles and books on the tabouret at her side. Always there was a spirited scramble for the seat closest to the mother. The fighting blood of the race was often to the fore. More than once Pauline slapped Rosalie, then fell upon her neck, wept for shame, implored forgiveness, and next day did it all over again. Adrienne and Louise sat on chairs, the youngsters on stools at the Duchesse's feet. They reported the morning's work with Mademoiselle Aufroy. The Duchesse was naturally indolent and very impatient. Her convent upbringing had not controlled her vivacity, "but she listened to each of us," Adrienne writes, "with persevering kindness. There was nothing cut or dried in her curriculum." She was too much the original to follow a pattern or receipt. Standardization, like psychology, was not in her vocabulary. It had no place in her conception of life. "She dictated letters to us before we could write," recounts the star pupil, whose

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after years were largely given to writing imploring letters to the Seats of the Mighty.

In conversation they learned some mythological stories. Fairy tales were taboo. Had they not the Lives of the Saints? As there was no one to ask "Do you believe in fairies?" they were content to listen to their mother read beautiful passages from the master poets: Corneille, Racine, Voltaire. There was no intolerance in the Duchesse's recognition of truth and beauty. To her they were one, and wherever met in literature she taught the children how to recognize them and pay just tribute. Voltaire's scoff of all she held sacred was no bar to her recognition of his genius. The children in turn read to her, and together they analyzed the beauties of master poetry and prose. To form their taste and judgment by oral analysis, to train their minds to solid reflection on each new subject of study was the Duchesse's aim. "She worked with all her mother tenderness to bring the truth within our ken, . . . she desired that everything we perceived should present itself to us as a whole. Principles, morality, history and facts, examples and the way to profit by them—all were related and bound together in her teaching, if I may say it, as in the designs of God." If she failed to convince the child with whom she reasoned she felt she had accomplished nothing. Her mind and heart thrilled for truth. She directed the faculties of each soul as it awakened scattering clouds, clarifying the vision; and so effective was this training that for long many prejudices and particularly vanities were entirely unknown to them. To regulate their lives by the principles of virtue as the Duchesse and the Duc—the rare times they saw him—exemplified and elucidated them by their conduct, became so habitual that the first time they encountered the contrary in what is



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vulgarly called "honest folk" caused them great surprise, and it took years of living in the world to modify it.

"My mother let us read to the bottom of her heart. She was careful, however, to keep from us what she suspected might injure." Adrienne bears witness that it was not only the admirable in the vivacious young mother that the children learned to imitate but what she found in herself to reform. Defects in herself that she could not clearly discern she would have the children correct in themselves by comparison of faults and principles. She would recount to them, for instance, circumstances which had deceived herself as to what she should have done; the cause and the consequence of the little errors that ensued. And they readily saw—those alert young twigs—how even with a just mind and a right heart one can fall.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE OPEN

**C**HILDHOOD was not all study. Far from it. Many happy holidays in the country made for robust joy and priceless memory. Adrienne was nine when she and Louise, who was her soul mate, as later Pauline was Rosalie's, had their first country outing. The grandees of Paris, as a class, scorned the country. Even in summer they rarely visited the great estates from which came the income that gave them town luxuries. Paris was their all-year-round pleasure-ground. The Noailles and kindred families, on the contrary, rarely came to Paris save in the winter. They worked with the peasantry, labored to lighten their burden, to ameliorate their condition. Adrienne's first country stay was brief, for the Duchesse was loath "to absent herself long from the children too young to bring with her." It was no little sacrifice, for she was "always gayer and happier in the country than in the town."

A favorite outing was to Meudon, where the Duchesse's grandfather had a large landed estate. They were generally accompanied by the Duchesse's nieces, Mademoiselle de Sarron, Mademoiselle de Pons and Mademoiselle de Montmisail—names to be written in French history.

The main sport was donkey rides down the side of Mont Valerin. Mademoiselle Aufroy's understudy, Mademoiselle Marin, conducted the donkey tours. This governess was "*petite*, a thin, dry blonde, very suscep-



## ARDENT ADRIENNE

tible and much attached to the duties she filled so well." She sat a donkey so straight and stiff and had such a scared expression that the children could not look at her without laughing. This angered her, but not so much as their hilarity when she fell from her mount, which she never failed to do repeatedly. As the falls were in the grass and she did not hurt herself, the cavalcade would noisily pass on. Woe to the amazon who detached herself from the train and went to Mademoiselle Marin's relief! Much bad humor and a scathing rebuke was her reward.

Once or twice in the summer they went to the beautiful estate of their grandfather, the Maréchal de Noailles, at the entrance to Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The Maréchal also worked in the fields with his peasants and labored in many ways to improve their living conditions. He received Adrienne and Louise with the grace and gallantry for which he was noted at Court and in Paris salons. He walked with them in the immense well-kept park. His wit and mirth kept them lively, as it did his guests, the most celebrated literary lights, the foremost of town and Court. Evenings he lost money to them playing lotto.

Autumn brought them, often for eight days at a time, to Fresnes, the lovely country home of the Duchesse's father. This *grandpère* was very deaf and not so gay as the old Maréchal, but they liked his third wife, an adorable woman.

But the playground of happiest memory was the lovely gardens of Hôtel de Noailles. On fête days innumerable cousins joined them there, playing blind man's buff, the same games known to the children of every land and every age. A donkey lured from Meudon was the laugh-maker of one memorable fête. The beast had for Made-

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moiselle Marin a malicious eye and was given to rapping her thin sides, to the youngsters' delight. The governess's reprimands only fed the laughter; but she evened up the next day with zero marks in deportment. The lovely gardens had many a chiaroscuro. "None of the tragedies of after-life," wrote Adrienne, "could ever efface the memory of our misery when from the garden we looked up one day to our mother's window and saw for the first time her dear face ravaged with smallpox pits and realized that never again would we see her as she was before."

This was 1760, when the Duchesse, while bringing forth a son, the last born, was stricken with the eighteenth century plague. The nature of her illness was kept from her, but her sufferings warned her of her danger; to leave her children when they were so young was unbearable. As for the Duc, so great was his grief, he scarcely looked at the longed-for son. To prevent their mother from discovering that she had smallpox, he suffered the children to be brought to her when she asked for them. In spite of this questionable gesture they escaped the disease, but the son died. . . .

The red-letter day of their sports was when Cousin Paul brought to the playground a fellow student of Collège du Plessis in rue Saint-Jacques. The newcomer wore "a suit of marine blue with rainbow trimmings and a tango-colored cap," the Collège's smart uniform. He was a big boy for his age—about eleven years. His nose was large, his hair red, and every move clumsy, awkward, self-conscious. He was painfully shy and spoke little. He had lived his short life in a feudal fortress-château in the blue-veiled mountains of Auvergne, Southern France. With Abbé Fayon, two years his tutor, he was come to Paris to join his mother in the

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home of his grandfather, the old Comte de la Rivière, a Breton nobleman. They occupied splendid apartments in the Luxembourg. The grandfather was surprised at the lad's progress. He entered him immediately in the Jesuit Collège du Plessis with Abbé Fayon, and soon he had a second tutor, Monsieur Frestel.

The Duchesse's half-brother, Monsieur de Fresnes, had put Adrienne and Louise through gymnastic drill when they accompanied their mother to the de Fresnes' various town and country houses, for the indefatigable Duchesse, not content with educating her own brood, prepared the youth for college. Shyly they told "the boy from Auvergne" how they enjoyed the exercise. He doted on the military and was "crazy to wear a soldier's uniform." All his forebears had been fighting men. His grandfather had already engaged for his military training a retired officer. Soon the boy would have a cadetship in the Black Musketeers, his grandfather's old regiment. The girls discovered that war was the only subject that aroused him to action. He put the Noailles children, their playmates and Mademoiselle Marin through a military manœuvre.

It was great fun. They liked him immensely, especially Adrienne, and they told him so as the great garden gates closed on his tango-colored cap and the lively Cousin Paul, but it was a long, long time before they or the garden again saw Gilbert Motier de La Fayette.



## CHAPTER V

### DISTURBING INTRUDERS

ADRIENNE was about eleven years old when childhood's insouciance came to a profoundly disturbing end. Delving into the Scriptures, which she knew by heart, her precocious mind was torn by religious doubt. From her tenth year, with the tender, trusting Louise, she had learned the *Catechism of Montpelier* under the guidance of Mademoiselle Marin. Together with the Duchesse, they studied the text of Messengin's *Exposition of Christian Doctrine* and the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*.

Louise understood and accepted the whole with sublime, unquestioning faith; Adrienne's mind and soul were rent asunder. She could not believe in the Real Presence. She was ashamed and tried to hide her misgiving; it seemed so disloyal to her mother and to God. . . .

The wise mother had dreaded the approach of their First Communion. She deferred it as long as conscience and pressure of conditions permitted. The difficulty of judging the disposition of a child, the natural uncertainty of its mind and the extreme delicacy of her own conscience were peculiarly disturbing. The sacrament of Holy Communion was to the Duchesse so great a blessing; she was so sensitive of its value that she felt she had no right, now that Adrienne and Louise were come to the age of reason, to longer defer it. If one had the right confidence there would be the right disposition. It was her duty to aid them, to examine them with care, to

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encourage them, which she did to their lasting enrichment.

Adrienne's skepticism was for a time distressing to the Duchesse, but her constant vision of God made her indulgent rather than exacting. Her disquietude was far from the violence of Dr. Boyer, who flogged Coleridge every day until he found a God; far from the anger of Shelley's father who withdrew financial support until the wayward poet should retract his heretical utterances.

One would think, as Adrienne said in later years, that she would have sought at this crisis advice of an older, more experienced mind. Were not the Vicar-General of Paris, the curé of Saint-Roche at her service? Unlike her contemporaries, the Duchesse d'Ayen avoided ecclesiastical discussion. "My mother," explains Adrienne, "was too penetrated with the responsibility of her duties to find escape by such an accepted means. She was a mother. It was for her to weigh and to decide that which interested her children. It was to her and to nobody else they were intrusted."

The sisters were confirmed the same year. Louise made her First Communion, but Adrienne's was deferred. She decided she could not take it. There was no arguing, no nagging, no reproof on the part of the mother. On the contrary, she encouraged the decision, for she knew that with time and reflection the bewildered child-mind would clarify and her Adrienne's faith be all the stronger for the questioning and the delay. For both it was a matter for earnest prayer. Adrienne renewed her devotions with increased fervor, as she did at every rise of doubt throughout her troubled life.

No sooner were the children confirmed than marriage was proposed. The Duchesse felt that the sacrament of marriage, like that of First Communion, made for or against eternal happiness. The worldly, power-grasping



## DISTURBING INTRUDERS

Duc d'Ayen had no such belief or scruple. His forebears, as John Adams was told, dining at Hôtel de Noailles upon his first arrival at Paris, "were remarkable for ages for their harmony with one another and for doing nothing of consequence without previous Council and Concert." It was the choice of "Council and Concert" in this instance that the Duc submitted to his Duchesse, confident of her approval.

He had traveled far since as a sixteen-year-old boy he brought his bride to Hôtel de Noailles. He had come out of the last of his four campaigns of the Seven Years' War a Lieutenant-General. He had been Inspector of the Government of Flanders and was at this time Governor of Roussillon. Although he rarely saw his daughters, he always had their future in mind.

The suitors he arranged for were the children's cousin, the Vicomte Paul de Noailles, and the Marquis Gilbert Motier de La Fayette.

The proposals were a little premature, even for that day of seeming unnaturally early marriages. The absorbed mother was wholly unprepared to part with her girls so soon. "Her anguish was unspeakable." The thought of giving them up to another—especially the passionate eleven-year-old Adrienne delving in Scripture, high-strung, temperamental—affected not only her heart but her brain, she told Adrienne long after.

Apparently the "Council" left not only the acceptance but the allotment of the suitors to the Duchesse. "I was scarcely eleven years old when M. de La Fayette was proposed to her for *one* of her daughters. My mother accepted without hesitancy the Vicomte de Noailles for Louise." He was the second son of the Maréchal de Mouchy, the brother of the Prince de Poix, "the purest light in Parisian society," and the famous Madame du

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Duras. She knew him from birth, had watched his upbringing and approved of it. As for the Marquis de La Fayette, despite the "good reports everybody gave him," she withheld her consent. He was not the husband for her Adrienne.

The Marquis Gilbert Motier de La Fayette was at the time little over thirteen years old. He was born and reared in the ancient fortress-château Chavaniac-La Fayette, in the blue-veiled mountains of Auvergne, four hundred miles from Paris. He was two years old when his father was killed at the Battle of Minden in the Seven Years' War. At thirteen he lost his mother, and a few weeks later his maternal grandfather, which left him independent possessor of a great fortune. His was a long line of fighting ancestors with Field Marshals and Court ladies in waiting, not inferior to the House of Noailles.

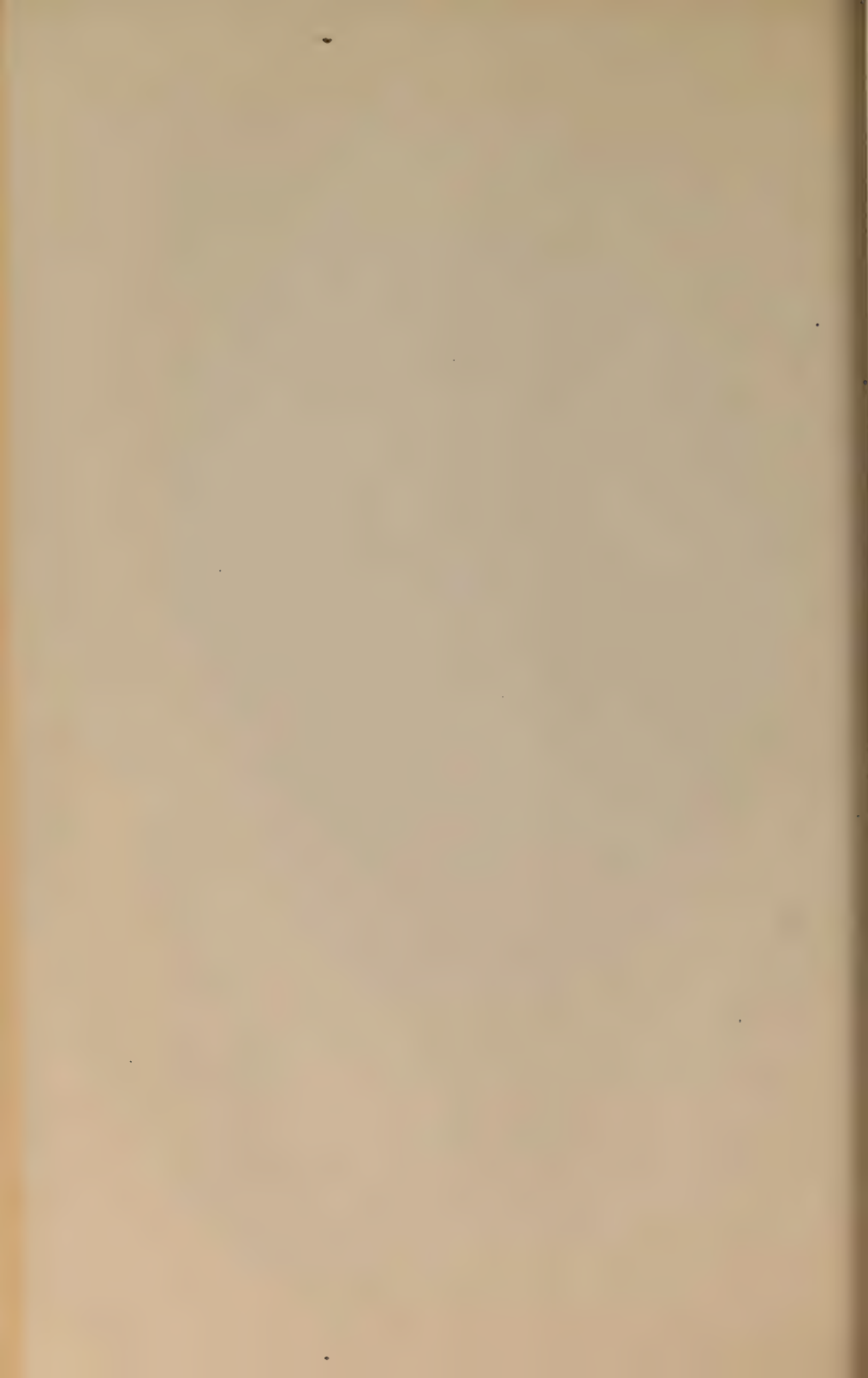
Never perhaps was a woman more indifferent to wealth and high position, more solicitous for character and soul, than the Duchesse d'Ayen. The boy's "extreme youth, loneliness, incomplete education, lack of guardian who could have his confidence"—above all his untrammelled wealth—were to the Duchesse dangerous. Her objection must have seemed unreasonable to the "Council." To the Duc it was maddening. He stormed and sulked in a most undukely fashion, then hied to Versailles, where he remained for many months.

The children knew nothing of the marriage proposals, but they witnessed the break between their parents—the first and only one recorded—and wondered what it was all about. They were dying to know but too well bred to ask.

Like the younger children, Adrienne and Louise were not a little afraid of their father. They did not know



THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE IN HIS YOUTH  
FROM THE PORTRAIT BY DANLOUX IN THE MUSÉE CARNAVALET





## DISTURBING INTRUDERS

him very well. He was rarely at home when they were visible. Nevertheless, all adored him. With his brilliant uniform, jeweled sword, princely bearing and unfailing gaiety, he kindled their imagination and they remembered him in their prayers.

The Duchesse brought to the consideration of the marriage proposition the same disposition as to Adrienne's religious doubts. "It was never by a first and wholly human impression that my mother was guided. In every circumstance where great interests troubled her she threw herself into the arms of God and took courage. . . . 'We know so little ourselves that which may follow certain decisive events making for the fate of our life,' I have heard her say, 'that all we have to do in such events is to lay aside, as far as possible, all passion and conduct ourselves by the law of reason and our duty, but never to attach ourselves exclusively to any particular idea; and after taking all the precautions prudence can dictate and having no negligence to reproach ourselves with, peaceably submit to the order of Providence, who knows better than we what is good for us.'"

## CHAPTER VI

### MENDING THE LUTE

THE "tall, big nosed, red haired" boy from Auvergne was permitted to play with the children in the lovely gardens on fête days as he had on his first visit there with Cousin Paul. From her chamber window and in strolls at play hour through the garden's stately flower-bordered walks, the Duchesse carefully studied the boy's character. She was too human, too reflective to be guided wholly by preconceived notions, and from the moment she knew him she prized the worth of the Marquis de La Fayette. She persisted, however, in withholding her sanction to the marriage. The Duc, who had set his heart upon it, was not discouraged.

At the height of his anger he rendered homage to the uprightness of his Duchesse.

"She has gone too far to draw back and change her mind," warned a courtier.

"You do not know Madame d'Ayen," he said. "Whatever stand she takes you may be sure she will come back like a child if you prove to her she is wrong. But she will *never* yield if she does not see it."

Happily she did see it, and before the year's end, the Duc returned to Hôtel de Noailles. The children's joy at the reconciliation was inexpressible.

"That day [September 21, 1772] will never," wrote Adrienne, "be effaced from my memory or my heart." Both marriages were decided upon, but not without conditions which the Duc was reluctantly forced to accept.

## MENDING THE LUTE

Marriage, insisted the Duchesse, must not be mentioned to Louise before another year, nor to Adrienne within eighteen months. The marriage of Adrienne was to be deferred at least two years, until after the completion of La Fayette's education. The youngsters after marriage were to live the first year or so with the Duchesse in Hôtel de Noailles.

Of all this the girls were happily ignorant. Likewise were the boys, who gleefully accepted the Duchesse's arrangement for an occasional visit with the *jeunes filles* in Hôtel de Noailles. With tutors and governesses, preferably Mademoiselle Aufroy, they were sometimes permitted to promenade in Boulevard du Temple, the spacious avenue of the Tuileries, where "men rode Thursdays." Later there were strolls in the famous driveway to the left of the Palais-Royal, where they saw "smart company in gorgeous toilettes."

"My mother did not propose to have her daughters distracted from their studies," and the driveway outings were judiciously timed. The children strolled unnoted by the spectacular world of gaiety, pomp and celebrity. The shadow of self never troubled Adrienne as her asking eyes drank in the spectacle. Her storms, then, as in later years, were of the soul, the heart. To the Auvergne boy, destined "to dash down the century on a white horse," to be overlooked, even at this tentative period, was a bit disturbing. He had gone far from that "no feeling whatever of curiosity to see the capital" with which he had come to Paris. But, as he said, the "astonishment on my way there because everybody did not take off their hats to me, as they used to do at Chavaniac to the young lord of the village," took new lease of life those unconscious wooing days in the driveway of Palais-Royal. Thirst for the "delicious sensation of the smile



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of the multitude," which he was to drink to the dregs, quickened as the promenaders ignored him. Only Adrienne's enthusiasm and high spirits responsive to his dream of the worlds he would conquer for the glory of France, lessened the smart of Society's failure to sense that he was the genius to "found America and bring forth the French Revolution." Recounting there, as in the Noailles garden, romance and adventure, of which he was always the hero, his awkwardness, shyness, hesitancy vanished, and to ardent Adrienne delving in the Scriptures he was, as he remained to her journey's end, the Knight of shining armor in quest of the Holy Grail. . . .

Louise did not know of her betrothal until two months of the day set for the wedding (May 12, 1773). Since earliest childhood she had had "a tender feeling for Cousin Paul, and the idea of their life union was far from disagreeable." Nevertheless, it was a weepy wedding in the church of Saint-Roche, crowded to the doors with the beau monde. The younger children—there were seven years between Louise and Pauline, six between the bride and Rosalie—boohooed outright; everybody dissolved in tears, "those who received so precious a *dépot* and those who lost it"; for, notwithstanding "there was nothing more touching than the union and confidence of the two families that were really one," it was the first break in the home life.

Louise's marriage gave Adrienne her first real touch with the world of fashion, for with the Vicomtesse she went often to Versailles to visit the latter's mother-in-law, the Maréchale de Mouchy, lady in waiting to the Queen. This is the Maréchale reputed to be the original of Dumas' "Mlle. Etiquette." Her martinet adherence to "form" is said to have filled with terror the "hoydenish, mannerless Austrian Hapsburg beauty," Marie An-



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toinette, when she came a bride to the Court of Louis XV.

The Duc d'Ayen, about this time, was appointed Captain of the King's Bodyguard. He took a house at Versailles, where he lived three months of the year within the precinct of the Court. Adrienne now went as often with the Duchesse to see her father as with Louise on her formal visits to the strait-laced Maréchale de Mouchy. Occasionally, she glimpsed the Dauphin's fascinating child-wife. There were six months of this exciting diversion from study and religious doubt, and she enjoyed every moment. Then—fateful day!—driving back to Paris from Versailles, the Duchesse spoke of the marriage arranged for her with the Marquis de La Fayette. For more than a year, she told the palpitating Adrienne—the child had given her heart to the boy from the first moment she saw him in the garden—she had “looked upon him and loved him as her son.”

The orphaned La Fayette was at Château de Chavaniac on his second vacation from Collège du Plessis when his beloved Aunt Chavaniac, who was virtually his mother, told him his grandfather, the Comte de Rivière, had arranged for him a marriage with Mademoiselle de Noailles.

Had he suspected it? Hardly. Certainly Adrienne was not in his mind when he wrote “my grandfather had arranged a marriage for me with Mlle. de Noailles.” For the latter was the name by which Louise until her marriage was known, while Adrienne was called Mademoiselle d'Ayen.

The previous year he had joined the Black Musketeers, the regiment his grandfather had commanded. His craze to wear a uniform was at last realized. With the Musketeers he rode in full regalia to Versailles, where he took part in the reviews before the King. “I thought

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all that delightful, because, in order to take part in a review, it was necessary to drill with my companions," says his *Memoirs*. After four years at Collège du Plessis, he went, on return from his second vacation at Château de Chavaniac, to live with his grandfather in the Luxembourg.

It was the custom of young noblemen who wished to become officers to enroll at the Military Academy at Versailles. This La Fayette did, and soon he was practising gymnastics as had the Noailles girls with Uncle Fresnes, and showing off the instruction he had received from the retired officer. With the Comte d'Artois, the Dauphin's younger brother, he learned to ride and fence. The Comte and the Marquis were about the same age, and soon were fast friends; for the Comte, as he said, found the clumsy, taciturn Marquis "amusing." He introduced him to his playmate, Marie Antoinette, and soon he was enrolled in her bodyguard, the *Epée de Bois*, the Court's gilded youth, defiant of the Old Order and avid for adventure.

The Court, at this period, was divided into two factions as is society to-day the world over: "the old bores and those *less than thirty*." The youngsters sported new ideas, costumes and manners. "The oldsters," then as now, "grumbled and were unheeded." Marie Antoinette and the Comte d'Artois were the ring-leaders of the young rebels.

## CHAPTER VII

### AND SO THEY MARRIED

**M**EANWHILE the Duchesse was laboring to keep Adrienne's "poor head, very much alive, very feeble, from going astray in such a great event as marriage with the Marquis." "My mother taught me how to ask the blessings of heaven on the state I was about to embrace." At the same time high society's edict was not disregarded. Couturières, modistes, jewelers and booters cluttered Hôtel de Noailles.

Unlike the marriage eight years later of the sixteen-year-old Pauline to the nineteen-year-old Marquis de Montagu, and later that of the youngest sister Rosalie to the Marquis de Grammont, there is no detailed record of the nuptials of Adrienne and La Fayette. That the stately, formal etiquette of the last decade of Louis XV's reign was scrupulously observed is unquestioned, so true to form was Hôtel de Noailles, despite the Duchesse's well-known indifference to pomp, luxury and display.

From the signing of the marriage contract, "solemn as a sacrament," and for many days after, it was for Adrienne continuous change of toilette. The old régime from far and near flocked to Hôtel de Noailles, as it had to the betrothal of Louise. With studied ritual and elaborate toilettes it made the customary calls, delivered the prescribed compliments, felicitations, banalities.

The drudgery of receiving—for drudgery it must have been to the restless, vivacious Adrienne—began at six



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o'clock in the evening and ended, rather continued, with an elaborate supper to intimates.

See Adrienne in long pointed corsage, voluminous panniers and powdered pompadour. Very straight, very proper she sits beside her mother on the great divan in the regal salon hung with priceless tapestries and ancestral portraits, and colorful with trophies of war, chase, and diplomacy. The Duchesse in *grande toilette* presents Adrienne to each caller. No one misses making two or three profound courtesies. Like the Wise Men of old, everyone brings gifts until the *corbeille de mariage* is a veritable fortune.

The Duc d'Ayen, much to the fore, is scarcely less felicitated than Adrienne, for the Duchesse's "inconsiderateness" in postponing the marriage was open secret to Court and Camp.

La Fayette hovers in the background, ill at ease. Outside Collège du Plessis and the Military Academy he is little known. Indeed the old noblesse scarcely recognize him as he is formally presented by his future father-in-law. He wears the uniform of the Black Musketeers and the clapping sword of the *Epée de Bois*, as was the fashion of gilded youth dining abroad. The ceremony of presentation over—guests never sat at a reception—he keeps close to his brother-in-law and chum, the Vicomte de Noailles. Neither youth is conscious at the moment of that strange world across seas where both are shortly to find adventure and the glory for which, like all soldiers of France, they thirsted. . . .

On a spring day of 1774 (April 11) the children were married. Not in the parish church, Saint-Roch, where all the Duchesse's daughters plighted their troth, but in the sumptuous chapel of Hôtel de Noailles the indissoluble knot was tied. That it was in deference to

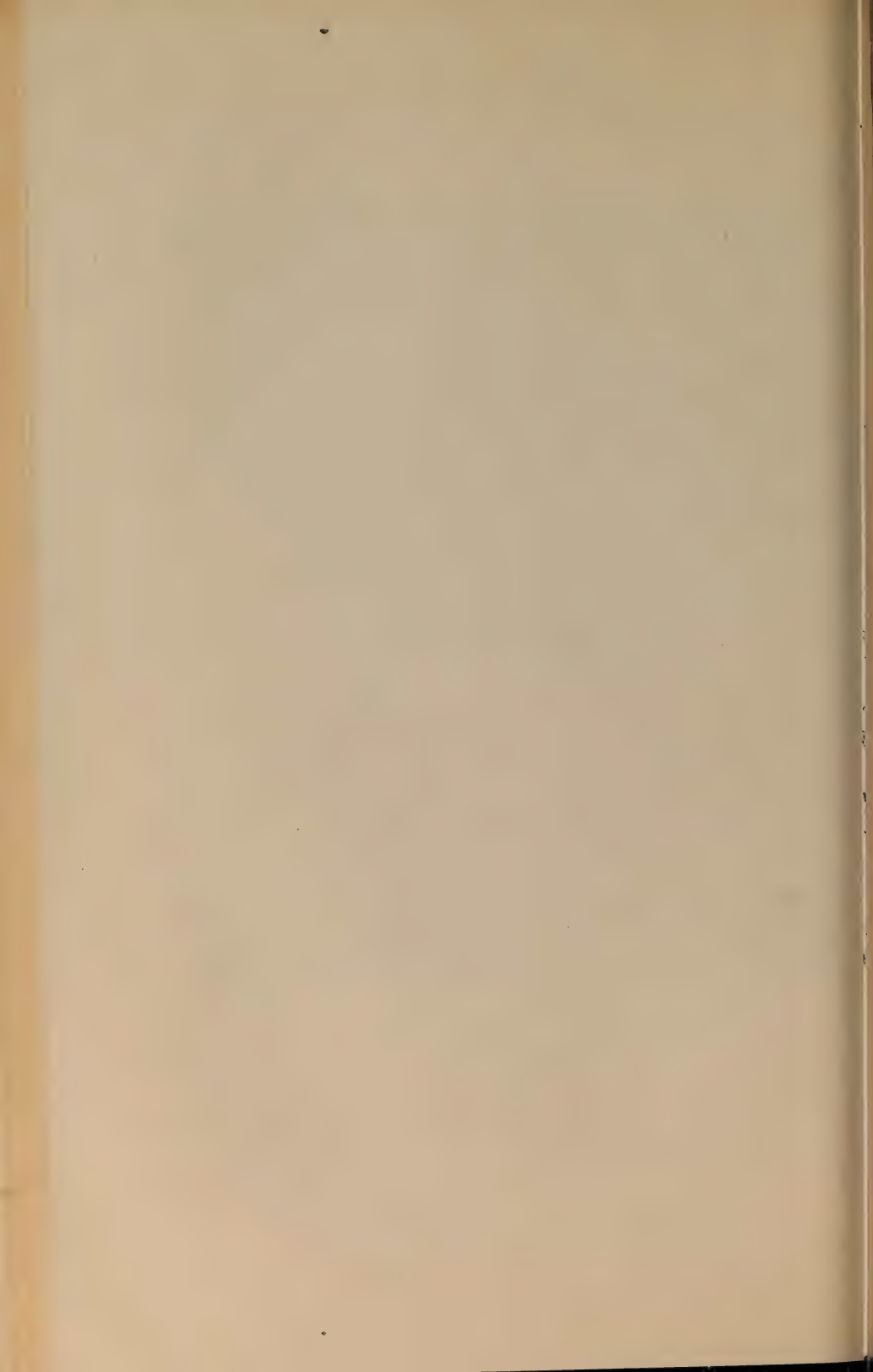


30 avril 1774



Monsieur le Comte DE LA RIVIERE, &  
Monsieur le Comte DE LUZIGNEM, sont  
venus pour avoir l'honneur de vous faire part  
du mariage de Monsieur le Marquis DE LA  
FAYETTE, leur arriere-petit-Fils & Neveu,  
avec Mademoiselle DE NOAILLES.

THE LA FAYETTE WEDDING INVITATION  
IN THE POSSESSION OF THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE



## AND SO THEY MARRIED

the Duchesse's wish, may be inferred. A nuptial mass in a public church and the bride not to take Holy Communion was hardly for her Adrienne. The Vicar-General of Paris, the Abbé du Murat, a cousin of La Fayette's, officiated and gave the Apostolic blessing.

The wedding breakfast was a veritable family fête; for the Noailles clan embraced not only a goodly portion of the Court but much of the flower of France, and it was never known to miss a tribal function. So more banquet than *déjeuner à la fourchette* was the wedding breakfast. The day ended with a supper of sixty covers.

Adrienne and La Fayette sat side by side understandingly beyond their respective fourteen and a half and sixteen years. There were no going-away heartbreaks; no audible weeping as at the marriage of Louise, for as stipulated in the Duchesse's acceptance of the marriage proposition, the children were to remain with her in Hôtel de Noailles for the first year or two.

Town and country fêtes for the newlyweds came to a sudden halt, for the following month (May, 1774) Louis XV died, and the Court was in mourning.

The same day and hour the unlamented King breathed his last, a British man-of-war put into Boston harbor to impose on tea the tax that ultimately boiled the kettle and brewed independent America.

The Dauphin, the unmourned King's grandson, was crowned Louis XVI. Marie Antoinette was Queen—the last Queen of France.

## CHAPTER VIII

### WHEN LOVE WAS YOUNG

THE honeymoon, dear to the Anglo-Saxon heart, apparently was not good form with eighteenth century noblesse. At any rate, it was not for the La Fayettees; for shortly after the wedding, through the influence of his father-in-law, La Fayette was given a regiment of the Noailles dragoons and left immediately for Metz, its headquarters. Why the girl-bride did not go with him is unchronicled. Military law may have intervened—or the Duchesse.

Great families at this time had a proprietary right in a regiment, as they had in everything that made for power and distinction. But La Fayette's appointment was on condition that he should not take command until his eighteenth year. Notwithstanding the heartbreak of so early a separation, the winter that followed was gay, if not wild, dissipation for Adrienne. With all the vivacity of her youth and temperament she entered into the spirit of the Palais-Royal balls, the plays and operas of Comédie Française and Comédie Italienne, chaperoned by the "serene and lovely" Louise and her cousin-husband, the Vicomte de Noailles, "skilled in the arts that please." She was active in every pleasure and enjoyed them all. "I do not believe," writes her daughter in goodly perspective, "that she herself would have gone in for gaiety before it was proved to her that she could not dispense with it without real inconvenience and that she ought to do it in conscience; for never in her young-



## WHEN LOVE WAS YOUNG

est day did she go in for worldly amusements without some motive of duty superior to those who forbade them. She did not decide lightly, but, having decided, she let herself go freely and without scruple."

It is remarkable that the religious doubts that continued to torment her did not make her less timorous on this point, but, to the contrary, in every contact she "sought the grace of God in order to know the truth." While she coquetted with conscience and the gay world of Paris, La Fayette was far from content at Metz. Back and forth he went, tarrying less at Hôtel de Noailles than at Versailles. Before marriage, his grandfather had presented him to the Court of Louis XV.

Despite his "reluctance to talk, his chilly serious manner, so strangely in contrast with the petulant brilliancy of his young companions," Marie Antoinette shortly after her coronation intrigued him on one occasion to accompany her and her gay entourage to a public masque ball at the Paris Grand Opera House. To go incognito to public gatherings was one of the wayward Queen's favorite follies.

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While making the round of the ballroom with the Queen on his arm, La Fayette recognized the domino of the Comtesse du Barry, whom Louis XVI had banished from the Court. La Fayette had seen the favorite on several occasions with Louis XV, notably at His Majesty's last supper, and he had witnessed the scene of alarm that took place in consequence.

He called the Queen's attention to the domino. She urged him to offer his other arm to "the insignificant and licentious woman to whose early spell upon the young untrained girl an astute historian attributes all the Queen's tragedy."

"I want to hear her voice," teased the Queen. Her

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devoted subject chivalrously offered his other arm to the banished favorite. After much conversation and several rounds of the ballroom, the Queen asked: "Do you know who I am?"

"Extremely well," replied du Barry. "You, Madame, represent the present; I the past."

Adrienne's only semblance of a honeymoon came with La Fayette's enforced return from Metz to be inoculated for smallpox—the eighteenth century plague. The disease had a particular liking for the aristocracy. In Court, army and high society pockmarked faces were inconspicuous because of their prevalence. Was it not the blight that took Louis XV?

Association from early infancy with her mother stricken while in throes of childbirth, and the Comtesse de Tessé, whose "once pretty face was despoiled at twenty," Adrienne was somewhat reconciled to its disfiguring ravages without lessening her fear for La Fayette.

To secure the isolation inoculation imposed, the young lovers retired to Chaillot, a suburb of Paris, where a house was rented for them. In the first stage of the vaccination, the Duchesse joined them, to amuse and give her beloved son the "care her tenderness and vigilance knew so well how to expend."

In wake of his restoration to health, the Duchesse came out of her heretofore cloister-like seclusion. She conducted Adrienne every week to the Queen's ball. Marie Antoinette was now come into her own. Already the obnoxious du Barry was a memory. The most licentious Court of Europe wore outwardly a semblance of the rectitude, the decency Louis XVI had at bottom but was powerless to impose upon his entourage.

At Hôtel de Noailles the Duchesse gave dinners and

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suppers, before and after balls and theatres, for her sons-in-law and their young friends, the gilded blades of the Queen's Bodyguard, the *Epée de Bois*. "My mother presided with such sincerity and natural goodness," Adrienne tells us, "that all the young folk were charmed and came repeatedly."

This dissipation was far from the Duchesse's liking. In pursuing it she was actuated by the sense of duty that dominated her and which did not escape her daughters. She did not wish to displease the Duc, who adored her but had a way of concealing it, by shirking the social obligations his position imposed. Above all, she would keep her daughters' husbands enamored of their wives and home life, rather than courted frequenters of salons and rendezvous, probably more to their radical leaning. For everywhere in the beau monde, she well knew, it was the philosophy of Voltaire, Rousseau, Condorcet, etc., that was swaying thought and action to the undermining of Altar and Throne.

This wholesome touch with a world ever on the move tended to clear Adrienne's head of much of the religious confusion that had distressed her.

At expiration of the first three months of the Duc's residence at Versailles—it was the yearly exaction—the Duchesse's sentiments on quitting it were those of Francis de Salle, envoy to the Court of Louis XIII, to negotiate the marriage of a Savoy princess. "It is a great loss of time to be at Court," he wrote, "and for many it will mean losing eternity also."

For a spiritual inventory the Duchesse went into retreat. On emerging, "refreshed and replenished," Adrienne was become so calm and reasonable that she "put the last hand to my religious education." This same year Adrienne made her First Communion, and on De-



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ember 15, 1775, she was a mother. La Fayette had much joy in baby Henriette—named after the Duchesse—joy as if she were a son, heir to the name of which he was the only living male representative. For, as he wrote the mother, when the sex of subsequent children was problematic, “an heir does not trouble me. I mean to live a long time.”

The summer of 1776, La Fayette rejoined his regiment at Metz. He was nothing loath to escape Court functions, the extravaganzas of the Little Trianon and the importunities of Adrienne’s grandfather, the Maréchal de Noailles, who would have his still awkward, taciturn grandson, whom he so little understood, in the service of the Comte de Provence, brother of the King.

Nothing was further from La Fayette’s dream of adventure than the conventionality of the Court. To avoid it he did not hesitate to insult the Comte himself, to the embarrassment of the Noailles family and the Comte’s lasting resentment, when he came to the throne as Louis XVIII.

Motherhood intoxicated Adrienne as it had the Duchesse d’Ayen, now reborn in the baby Henriette, her first grandchild. But while the doting mothers built castles for the “infant crying in the night,” destiny was busy at Metz. For subtly, unsuspectedly, it was for La Fayette to meet there on a mid-August night, the turning point of his amazing career and to indirectly lay the corner stone of Adrienne’s unparalleled tragedies.

In pride of fatherhood, he was impatiently awaiting the sixth of September, his eighteenth birthday, to take command of his regiment, when came an invitation to dine with the Comte de Broglio. The Comte was Governor of the town of Metz. La Fayette, with the officers stationed at “the dull, stupid barracks,” went to



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the dinner. It was in honor of the Duke of Gloucester, the brother of George III. The Duke had incurred His Majesty's disfavor by marrying the natural daughter of Horace Walpole's "sweet nephew." He was traveling on the Continent incognito, and bore his kingly brother no good will. The Duke amused the company with the latest news of the rebellious American Colonists with whom he was in hearty sympathy. In glowing colors he painted the rebels' drastic sack of the royal governors; the muster of a Continental army and the Congress appointment to Commander-in-Chief of a colonel of a Virginia troop named George Washington.

"The young Virginian," said the Duke, "showed much bravery and skill in wars against the Indians and the French. *Voilà tout.*"

All this was news to the youngest and the most obscure of the Comte de Broglio's brilliant company. The recital held him spellbound. Thirstily he drank in every word and the Duke was flattered. In the salons of Paris and the Court of Versailles, La Fayette had heard much prating of the ages enshrined trinity: Liberty, Freedom, Equality.

Was not his Adrienne's aunt, the Comtesse de Tessé, whom he was to adore, the disciple and intimate of Voltaire and like radicals? To talk liberty, to sport its symbols was one thing; to fight, achieve or die for it like those doughty men across the seas was intoxication, adventure after his own heart.

The shy, inarticulate young soldier, spoiling for action, suddenly found the speech of his fighting forebears. He plied the Duke with questions. In the rebellion of the Thirteen Colonies, as the English lord pictured it, he revisioned his boyhood dream in the mountains of Auvergne, "to go all over the world in pursuit of fame."

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That night he resolved to go to America; to fight for its liberty; to sacrifice his fortune, and, if need be, his life, for its freedom. It was humanity's cause and he was its pre-ordained champion. He saw, from the life at Versailles, what the freedom of America meant to the safety of France.

He glowed with the pride of the discoverer. He had yet to learn that there were astute minds, if not men of vision, in the cabinet of the vacillating Louis XVI. They napped to be sure, but they were far from sleep.

## CHAPTER IX

### KNIGHTHOOD IN FLOWER?

**W**HAT seemingly inconsequential incidents turn the fate of individuals and nations!

The eighteen-year-old Marquis, who from earliest childhood had thrilled to the glory of world conquest, subconsciously visualized that history-making night at Metz, not only his own destiny but that of France. As for Adrienne, she was not in the picture.

Pure-minded, whole-heartedly as a Galahad, he had leaped to the defense of Young America as he drank in the Duke's recital of its wrongs and aspirations. His consuming thought, born then to wax to the end of his consistently inconsistent career, was for the liberty, the freedom of the human race as he saw it embodied in the struggle of the Colonists. His spirit was that of the America brought up for more than fourscore years on that quixotic gesture at Metz, the spirit that rallied it to the Battle of the Marne, to cancel the inherited tradition—America's debt to France. For did not "our boys" believe, as did La Fayette for long years after his first American adventure, that France was actuated solely by humanitarian motif, democratic sympathy when it crossed three thousand miles of sea to aid the Colonists in their uneven struggle to be freed of foreign domination?

The World War Doughboys, if not the Unknown Soldier at Arlington, are wiser to-day as was La Fayette later when he frankly wrote in his *Mémoires*: "The des-

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tiny of France was in the balance as well as that of England. . . . If England could retain those thirteen Colonies in her Empire there would be an end to our West Indies, to our possessions in Africa and Asia, to our maritime commerce, and consequently to our navy,—in short to our political existence."

Happily, he was ignorant of the true situation as he thrilled to the Duke of Gloucester's account of the Battle of Lexington and the taking of Fort Ticonderoga. He sensed only what the freedom of America would make for human liberty and the safety of France; for, like all French officers and generations of their forebears, he had no love for the British.

Pondering on what he heard at the dinner, he forthwith made ready to quit the Old World for the New. He kept his secret for long locked within his heart. If Adrienne figured in his thought or dream of foreign conquest, she never knew it.

Before the Declaration of America's Independence, he obtained (June 11, 1776) semi-retirement from the army he had so recently joined. He would avoid the charge of desertion. The following fall (October, 1776) he went back to Paris to reconnoitre for the Great Adventure.

By now it was too good to keep hermetically sealed, and swearing them to inviolable secrecy, he took into his confidence his boon companions: the Comte de Ségur and the Vicomte de Noailles. Thé Comte de Ségur was Adrienne's prospective uncle; his marriage to Mademoiselle de Fresnes, the Duchesse d'Ayen's youngest step-sister, was pending. As for the Vicomte de Noailles, was he not cousin, and brother-in-law? Both youths were a trifle older than La Fayette and had seen active service. Like all radicals and much of the younger



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generation of the corrupt intriguing Court, including Marie Antoinette, they rejoiced in America's Declaration of Independence.

With boastful arrogance not a few savants attributed the Colonists' victory to the writings of the French philosophers: Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, Condorcet and their disciples. This when there was hardly a patriot—not excluding Washington, Franklin or Adams—likely to know of or to be familiar with the French or any philosophy of the so-called humanitarianism. The hot-blooded, pampered young blades of the Court and Camp, weary of their banalities, craved adventure. Already, theoretically, they were with La Fayette for the abolishment of kings, thrones, titles, privileges. To make a world "safe for democracy"—make it speedily with sword, romance, adventure. That was the life!

It was seven o'clock in the morning when La Fayette burst into the Comte de Ségur's bedroom. "I am off to America to fight for her liberty!" he announced.

"I am with you," cried the Comte, and leaping from the bed he turned a *pas seul*.

Unlike the Marquis, neither the Comte nor the Vicomte were independent possessors of large fortunes. La Fayette's income at the time was one hundred and twenty thousand livres, about six hundred thousand American dollars, an immense fortune for that day. Unless the Comte and the Vicomte could get a paying job in the American Army, they dared not fare forth with the adventurous Marquis. But they could keep a secret, not only from the Noailles but their own families, keep it also from the Government and the French and English spies permeating Paris. Before La Fayette completed his arrangements, however, their application to the War Office to serve as French officers in the Amer-

ican Army was made known to their families and they were forbidden to leave the country. In some miraculous way La Fayette's secret at this crisis remained intact.

Undaunted by his companions' failure, La Fayette, with the ignorance and audacity of youth, forged ahead, meeting at every turn seemingly insurmountable obstacles; for he did not know that the current Minister of Foreign Affairs, Comte de Vergennes, had secretly sent a spy to America to learn the popular feeling, and that the day before the Duke of Gloucester dinner, the French Ambassador at Madrid was instructed to enlist the Spanish Government in joint action against England. Obviously, to stir up the Colonists was to the interest of France. He was not the first, as he had prided himself, in the game. Indeed, the manœuvre harked back to when the Marquis was all of eleven years old and had come first to Paris with his tutor; for it was about that time that Louis XV's Prime Minister, the Duc de Choiseul, sent Baron von Kalb to America to find out to what extent the British Stamp Act had estranged the Colonists. The Baron was a German peasant turned soldier of fortune. To advance his promotion in the French Army he had conferred upon himself the title of Baron. Before his American espionage he had fought in the Seven Years' War under the command of the Comte de Broglio. Returned from the New World, he reported the situation to his old commander at Metz. "The American War is on, M. le Comte. It is for your military lordship to achieve glory there. With your position, your war experience, your service to the American Cause would be priceless."

The Governor of Metz was nothing loath to be Commander in General of the "undisciplined farmers" as

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the Continental Army was dubbed, provided he was handsomely paid and had charge of foreign relations. The impetuous young Marquis knew nothing of this back history when he laid his project before the Comte de Broglio, who promptly decried it. "It would be a rash move," warned the Comte. "I saw your uncle die in the Italian Wars; I was present at your father's death at the Battle of Minden, and I will not be accessory to the ruin of the one remaining branch of the family," was the Comte de Broglio's ultimatum. But the Black Musketeer, bristling at this opposition, was not to be diverted from his purpose. Finding him deaf to persuasion and bent on risking family, fortune and life in a foreign cause, the Comte reluctantly yielded to the boy's entreaties and gave him a letter to Baron von Kalb. In Paris the Baron lost no time in introducing La Fayette to Silas Dean, to whom the youth made known his desire to enlist in the American cause.

Silas Dean was the Colonists' agent in Paris. To procure arms, ammunition and enlist volunteers was his mission. Above all, it was for him to urge the French Government to recognize Independent America. Silas Dean's position was far from a happy one. To enlist volunteers without showing partiality or giving offense, and at the same time evade the British spies honeycombing Paris, was no small feat. How to screen from the British Government that the French Government knew what was going on, taxed the American agent's ingenuity.

His Majesty, Louis XVI, defend the American rebels against France's ally? Preposterous! Was not England the vogue in Paris from tweeds and spats to tea, gambling, horse racing and mistresses?

La Fayette's zeal captivated Silas Dean. Promptly



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he accepted him, with promise of a commission as major-general. In pleading for the young aristocrat, Baron von Kalb, who through the Comte de Broglio's influence had secured two years' absence from the French Army, played for a like commission for himself and won it.

How to get to America was now the problem. Since the Duke of Gloucester's dramatic stories, Washington's army had been badly beaten. The British had captured New York. So gloomy was the outlook that Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee had joined Silas Dean in Paris. They came in quest of French livres and volunteer soldiers—came as did Joffre to New York for the morale of American dollars and a made-over-night military reinforcement.

The envoys felt it their duty to discourage La Fayette from going to America. They assured him the Colonists' credit was exhausted and the envoys had no money to charter a ship. La Fayette, undaunted, speeded to Silas Dean to thank him for the acceptance of his service. "I will buy a ship to carry your officers," he said. "We must put on a brave front. I will share America's fortune in the hour of danger." And straightway he bought a ship, the *Victoire*, to be delivered at Bordeaux by the middle of March.

Meanwhile what of the girl-wife eating out her heart for sight of him; hungry to know what he was doing, thinking, dreaming? How large a part did she, their first-born baby Henriette, or the unborn under her heart have in his scheme of things?

To allay suspicion—perhaps it was to keep from sharing his secret with her—he avoided Hôtel de Noailles and went *sans un mot* from Metz to London, where Adrienne's uncle, the Marquis de Noailles, was French Ambassador to the Court of Saint James.



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As the Ambassador's guest the Marquis had the time of his young life, for it was the policy of the English Court to fraternize with Frenchmen of title and quality, and every hospitality was for the Ambassador's kinsman.

He was presented to fat, pudgy George III and his red-faced Queen Caroline, who later tried—without success—to snub Abigail Adams. He dined and wineed with the courtiers, laughing in his gold lace ruffled sleeves at their gibes at the expense of the Colonists. At the Opera he met Clinton and sat opposite the General Fitzpatrick he was to encounter on American battlefields—the statesman who was to plead for his life before the British Parliament.

Sense of propriety alone, he tells us, prevented him from going with the bloods to the seaports to watch the embarkation of English troops for America, society's main diversion.

From London he wrote—to Adrienne? Not a word—but to her father, oh, yes, a long epistle. It was not to be delivered until after he had sailed. Liberty's Knight flattered himself that the superroyalist, Duc d'Ayen, would be delighted to learn that his son-in-law was a general officer in the army of the United States of America!

"I have found the rarest chance to distinguish myself and learn my profession. I have done what I could for them, and some day their interests will be dearer to me than my own. . . . As soon as I shall receive news of my friends I shall leave here, and without stopping in Paris I shall go aboard a ship which belongs to me and that I have loaded. . . . I am perfectly delighted to have found so good an opportunity to do something and learn something." Was there a kiss, a word for

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Adrienne? *No.* She was dumped in with "family, friends and 'Dear Papa' in the enormous sacrifice I am making in leaving them."

Three weeks of studious gaiety ended in a surreptitious return to France. He lived three days in hiding at the home of Baron von Kalb at Chaillot—the Chaillot where he and Adrienne had passed the belated honeymoon and the Duchesse d'Ayen merrily saw him through vaccination. To avoid Hôtel de Noailles was his main solicitude. Friends were shunned—all save the Comte de Ségur and the Vicomte de Noailles, already in his confidence. To them he told the details of arrangement and the officers to accompany him.

The contracts were now signed and everything was in readiness but the ship. Then stepped in the British Ambassador at Paris. Lord Stormoth had little faith in the French Minister's protestations of neutrality. With instructions from London, he notified the Duc d'Ayen of his son-in-law's capers. Naturally, the Duc was enraged.

Well enough for young French officers to help the rebels under cover, but, with England on the scent, their conduct must be decried. Everybody "in the know" trembled, from Silas Dean to Ambassador de Noailles and Louis XVI. The King issued an order prohibiting his officers to take service in the English colonies. He specifically named the Marquis de La Fayette.

Before the Duc's "terrible letter" (he was yet to receive the Marquis' filial *billet*) and the King's *lettre de cachet* reached him, La Fayette was at Bordeaux.

Before quitting the humble home at Chaillot, he unflinchingly witnessed his host's touching farewell to his three children and the brave wife, to whom the Baron von Kalb, when aboard the *Victoire* wrote: "I have al-

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ways thought the Marquis to blame for keeping the matter secret from his wife until the moment of his departure. If he had told me in Paris what he has admitted since, I should have remonstrated most earnestly against the whole scheme. If it be said he has done a foolish thing, it may be answered that he acted from most honorable motives."

To confound his pursuers, he visited at Bordeaux Adrienne's great-uncle, the Maréchal de Mouchy, commander of the troops at Guyenne. He was the Maréchal whom John Adams met one year later, thanks to La Fayette. His diary (April 30, 1778) notes: "I dined with the Maréchal de Mouchy, the Duc and Duchesse d'Ayen, their daughter, the Marquise de La Fayette, and other great company. The Maréchal lives in all the splendor and magnificence of a viceroy, which is a little inferior to that of King."

Surreptitiously La Fayette boarded the *Victoire* with Baron von Kalb and the officers and put off for Spain to await there Paris letters. They came a plenty. The first was the King's command for him to go directly to Marseilles and join there his father-in-law and the Comtesse de Tessé for ten months' travel in Italy. Learning that the *lettre de cachet* was instigated by the Duc d'Ayen, La Fayette was apparently distressed. Perhaps he thought of Adrienne, sensed the family resentment, feared the Government's displeasure. Courageously, he returned to Bordeaux and declared his responsibility for the whole affair. . . .

How finally, disguised as a postilion, he mounted horse and headed, not for Marseilles but for Bayonne; how the inn-keeper's daughter, who had seen him pass through shortly before from San Sebastian to Bordeaux, recognized him and at sign from the masquerader threw



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the pursuers off the scent, enabling him to regain (April 17, 1777) the *Victoire* and three days later sail for America; how after fifty-six days of monotonous sea he landed at Charleston, South Carolina, and going before Congress at Philadelphia offered his services without pay and was appointed (before the King's protest could reach it) Major-General of the American Army, are romance and adventure not outdone by Dumas or Scott. But of the one power that could have withheld him, and by so doing, retarded if not wholly defeated the Colonists, how strangely silent is history!



## CHAPTER X

### "CRUEL DEPARTURE"

TO grasp fully the significance of the "wild goose chase," as La Fayette's flight was regarded by the old régime, and his seeming desertion of the adoring girl-wife, let us recall the conditions that obtained in the France and America of that far-off day. While the throne of the Bourbons tottered and England threatened France with war, came America's Declaration of Independence. It gave the gilded youth of Marie Antoinette's bodyguard a new thrill. Every young blade and not a few veterans of the French Army were for following La Fayette "over seas." His "rash move" split Paris into factions. Families divided as in the North and South during our Civil War.

Lord Stormoth wrote to his Government: "French women blame the relatives of the Marquis de La Fayette for attempting to thwart him in so noble an enterprise. 'If the Duc d'Ayen,' said one grand dame, 'opposes such a son-in-law in such a chivalrous cause, he ought never to hope to marry his daughters.'"

Madame du Deffand wrote to Horace Walpole on March 31, 1777:

The most singular and astonishing departure is that of M. de La Fayette, whom you saw the day you dined with our Ambassador [Marquis de Noailles]. He is not twenty and he left for America, taking with him eight or ten friends in a ship he bought and equipped at his own expense. When his friends heard of it

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they sent officers racing to Bordeaux to stop him and bring him back, but he had set sail three hours before. . . . He is to have the rank of Major-General, with permission to return to France in case we are at war or if domestic affairs make his return necessary. It is folly, no doubt, but it does not dishonor him, on the contrary it manifests his courage and desire for *la gloire*. He is more praised than blamed, but his wife gone four months with [second] child, his father-in-law, his mother-in-law and all his family, feel dreadful about it.

Jared Sparks in his *Life of Washington* says that La Fayette told him that "his wife did not join in the outcry, but approved of his enterprise from the beginning and threw no obstacle in his way." Either Sparks or La Fayette romanced. Which? For, as oft falls out in the closest knit corporations, all the world knew of his flight and its purpose before the "Dear Heart" of his American letters. How could she approve of what she did not know or suspect? She had not seen him or heard from him since before he left Metz for London. In consideration of her delicate condition, the Duchesse took every precaution to conceal the true state of affairs, as it trickled to Hôtel de Noailles. When evasion was no longer possible, Adrienne, "outside of what she suffered herself," Virginia reveals, "had the chagrin of seeing the anger of my grandfather [Duc d'Ayen]. She felt that the more she excited their pity, the more they would blame my father. She dissimulated the tortures of her heart. She preferred being judged a child of little feeling than occasion for finding my father in the wrong. My grandmother's care was a real consolation. Her elevated sentiments made her understand and appreciate every move in the conduct of her son-in-law. She judged him then as did all the world when he re-

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turned victorious." True, Adrienne, "threw no obstacle in his way."

But in the fortress-prison of Olmütz, twenty years after the history-making dinner at Metz, Adrienne writes in her *Life of the Duchesse d'Ayen*: "M. de La Fayette executed the month of April [1777] the project he had meditated for six months—to go serve the cause of America's independence. . . . I was pregnant and I loved him dearly."

The heartbreak of the girl-wife articulate at last!

"It was a cruel departure," she writes for her children. Out of the righteousness of the pent-up feelings of the vanished years, the admission is wrung. With a toothpick dipped in Chinese ink she wrote it on the margin of an illustrated volume of Buffon, smuggled into the prison. That her *Life of the Duchesse d'Ayen* would ever fall under alien eyes, she then little reckoned. Not that it would have swerved her from truth; for through the tragedies life had meted to her, she had come to recognize only the will of God, and through her submission to it, hers was become the peace the "world cannot give or take away." And yet, as the written words to her children substantiate, in "deep self" the "cruel departure" lived on; and it continues to live—between the lines of her tempestuous life—despite the disposition of La Fayette biographers to dismiss it lightly or ignore it wholly.



## CHAPTER XI

### SUSPENSE

**A**DRIENNE'S second child was one month old before she had news of the "vagabond father," that La Fayette admitted he was (August 1, 1777). It was the child of whom she wrote: "My dear Anastasie, whom I seemed to foresee from then what a gift I received from God, was destined from the first moment of her birth to make me feel in the midst of the evils of life one is yet capable of joy."

For four nerve-racking months she knew nothing of La Fayette's whereabouts. Had he reached America? Was he well received? Did he think of her? Had he forgotten, ceased to love her? The long silence, the wearing suspense were no surprise to the Duchesse d'Ayen. The anguish through which Adrienne lived with her babes, Henriette and Anastasie, only gave the youthful grandmother "new courage, inspired her to new acts of grace to the Providence she felt protected, preserved and guided him" whom she had taken to her heart from the first moment she knew him; for she saw in this drastic move "less the folly of a young man than the urge of destiny."

La Fayette intrusted his letters written daily aboard the *Victoire* to three sailing vessels, each batch in custody of a stranger making for France. If one carrier failed, another might safely bring to port, at least an installment of his voluminous justification of his flight, his love, his loneliness. That all reached Adrienne was



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a miracle, for the high seas were scoured by British frigates out for French spoils. The consolation the letters brought was vividly shared by Hôtel de Noailles.

In the "vagabond father's" repeated queries: "Do you still love me? Will you always love me? Have you forgotten me? How did you take my going? Did you love me less? Have you forgiven me? I beg you not to forget an unhappy man who has paid dear for the wrong-doing of leaving you and who has never felt so strongly how much he loves you. Is it true that you will love me forever?" "Dear Heart" forgot the deluging tears, the misgivings of the unhappy past.

But the heart-ease was not for long. In wake of these first letters was the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777. La Fayette had his first encounter with the enemy. He was wounded and laid up for repair six weeks in a Pennsylvania hamlet.

Paris bristled with false rumors. The *Gazette* announced his death. To protect Adrienne from contradictory reports, the Duchesse took her and Louise, who had so narrowly escaped like separation from the Vicomte de Noailles, to her father's country estate in Burgoyne.

In soothing sylvan retreat La Fayette's letters were read and reread; and the Duchesse's tender solicitude saw that Adrienne's replies were forwarded—no easy matter, since England commanded the seas.

From Burgoyne the sisters went to Raismes to visit the Comtesse Augusta de la Marck, whose husband was a close friend of the Mirabeau that plotted ten years later the death of La Fayette. It was October before they got back to Paris, and Adrienne had direct news from La Fayette of his first battle for American liberty.

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

Sept. 12, 1777, Philadelphia

DEAR HEART:

I write two words by some French officers that are going back to France. I will begin by saying that I am very well, because I must finish by saying that yesterday we had a real fight, and that we did not get the best of it. Our Americans after standing firm for some little time were put to rout. While I was trying to rally them, *messieurs les Anglais* wounded me slightly in the leg. It is nothing, dear Heart, for the ball didn't touch bone or nerve, and I got off with nothing worse than to be on my back for a time, but that vexes me greatly. This affair I am afraid will have bad consequences for America. We must try to make up for it, if we can.

Adrienne's letters covering La Fayette's four voyages to America are lost. Much was destroyed during the French Revolution. Not a little she burned at Château de Chavaniac when gendarmes came to arrest her. La Fayette's wail over his failure to hear from her those long trying months covering Anastasie's birth and the Battle of Brandywine was not without foundation, for not a letter the Duchesse dispatched with characteristic tact and diplomacy reached him. Why his letters should arrive safely in France while for long hers failed to make America is not clear. Safe to charge it to the ill-fate that pursued Adrienne. Always it was hers to be thwarted, held in suspense, turned on the rack for what seemingly was beyond her responsibility or control.

Listen to the "vagabond husband":

Camp near Whitemarsh, Oct. 29, 1777.

DEAR HEART:

M. de Valport will give you a long account of me. . . . I have no resource, dear heart, but to write and write again without assurance that my letters will reach you, and to try to console

## SUSPENSE

myself by the pleasure of talking to you about the grief, the mortal woe of not receiving a word from France. . . . Oh! do you pity me, do you realize how much I suffer? . . . The less I deserve your love, the more you assure me of it, comfort me. . . . It is a terrible thing to be reduced to mere writing when a man loves as I love you, and shall to my last breath.

Her letters had not reached him! Her heart was torn anew; her fears redoubled. He would think her indifferent, neglectful, faithless! How could he? But he might. In the back of her mind was the "cruel departure."

That "Dear Heart" did not swallow bait and hook "Chatterbox's effusions," accept them all without protest or reproach may easily be deduced from his continuous protestations; his constant reiterations of love and contrition.

"Do you think it a pleasure for me to be here?" he writes from Valley Forge, "when I might be with all the comforts and joys of those I love?"

Did Adrienne retort as well she might and no modern of sixteen to sixty years would have failed to do: "Who asked you to abandon them?" Perhaps she did. We shall never know. But this we do know that never—without realizing it perhaps—was La Fayette happier. He was reveling in the attentions poured upon him; the confidence and love of his commanding officer, Washington, and the flattering devotion of the ragged army it was his proud privilege to clothe and to muster to fighting trim.

While Adrienne read and reread his outpourings, we may well believe hers was that immense mental reservation, which she preserved intact, to her journey's end. For aside from her consuming passion for the impetu-

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

ous soldier, was her increasing faith in his mission; her invincible belief as the years went on in the good he was destined to achieve in liberating mankind from the inhumanity, the injustices the *ancienne noblesse* had helped to create and to foster.



## CHAPTER XII

### BACK HOME

**I**N the winter of 1778 "Dear Heart" had news often enough of La Fayette's movements. Every letter soothed her heart and broadened her intellect with a quickened interest in the Franco-American-British situation. The alliance of France and America (February, 1778) kindled the Duchesse with an interest that heretofore she had not given to politics. In this tardy awakening—tardy for a Frenchwoman of her mentality—Adrienne's solid intellect developed along the same line. So while painfully fulfilling the common lot of woman in bringing forth her second born, she was unconsciously being schooled to meet the controversies in which the hazard of fortune was to precipitate her upon his return to France.

The Marquis' sentimental wail, his personal upbraiding and self-justification of his flight gradually lessen. More and more, he writes at length of conditions as he might to a War Minister or a Chief of Cabal.

Not for a moment is "Dear Heart's" intelligence underestimated. Did he ever suspect how superior it was to his own?

Never!

Adrienne's delight in all he wrote, joy in his popularity and success were troubled by thoughts of the danger of war. Had not his father been killed at the Battle of Minden the year she was born? Anxiety for his safety was not her only torment. Little Henriette, for

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

whom so many kisses came across seas, died at the age of twenty-two months, in her mother's arms.

Hôtel de Noailles was busily preparing for the wedding of the Duchesse's third daughter, Clotilde (Mademoiselle d'Epernon) to the Vicomte du Roure, when La Fayette came back to France (1779) in the interest of the American cause.

The Duchesse prepared Adrienne for the happy moment of reunion as she had for the first news of the "cruel departure." Her "intoxicating joy was beyond all measure."

"He arrived Thursday [February 11, 1779] two hours before midnight and got down to Versailles [twelve miles from Paris] at the Prince de Poix's who was giving a ball," wrote Madame du Deffand to Horace Walpole. "La Fayette went to bed there," continues Madame du Deffand, "and the next day was closeted with the Ministers. It was two hours after dinner when he set out for Paris. He was instructed not to see any one but his relatives."

Technically the King's *lettre de cachet* which had failed to overtake him at Bordeaux still held good. One of those farcical situations dear to the Gallic heart! The closer he kept to Hôtel de Noailles the speedier would be His Majesty's pardon. So the joy-intoxicated Adrienne had the "vagabond" under the same roof for a *whole* week.

Tête-à-têtes were constantly interrupted, for all Paris and the provinces flocked to Hôtel de Noailles to smother the American Major-General with kisses and felicitations.

Duc d'Ayen—"Dear Papa"—was down from his high horse. The son he had so roundly berated to the King

## BACK HOME

was less the witless knight beating a hopeless windmill than he had suspected. As for the Comtesse de Tessé, La Fayette was henceforth her hero, as Voltaire was her master. Adrienne, who had judiciously concealed much of her sympathy and understanding of La Fayette from the family, whom she felt secretly resented his quixotic gesture, must have chuckled outright at sight of radical Aunt de Tessé and monarchial Papa d'Ayen hanging upon the "Chatterbox's" lips. For now he was truly what he wrote he would be on his return a "Chatterbox." His recital of Valley Forge; his meeting and friendship with the great Washington, whom "Nature created for the American Revolution, and in doing so did herself honor"; the young Republic's tumultuous joy over France's recognition of its independence; the "very pretty, very simple and deliciously clean American ladies"; the freedom and liberty of its people—"all citizens are brothers"—whom he "loved as his very own." What a story for a starved, tax-ridden nation and a licentious Court! How escape the lure of this emancipated country across seas where all men, before the law, were born equal? To Adrienne it was: "How escape the lure of its incomparable champion!" And few did, as she was to learn in the subsequent years of rarely unalloyed joy.

La Fayette's imprisonment in Hôtel de Noailles speedily ended in an audience with the King, to whom the Congress wrote: "We have advanced the Marquis de La Fayette to the rank of major-general in our armies, which, as well as by his prudent and spirited conduct, he has manifestly merited. We recommend this young nobleman to your Majesty's notice as one whom we know to be wise in council, gallant in the field, and patient under the hardships of war. . . ."



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His Majesty, King of France and Navarre, too humane, too unworldly to see in France's recognition of America's independence the death knell of monarchy, gently reprimanded the young rebel, then plied him with questions, and ended in commending his military exploits.

Adrienne saw the Court vying with Paris and the Comédie Française—unheard of departure—in lauding the New World's twenty-one year old Major-General.

In the lull that succeeded the unprecedented public applause—inevitable as night follows day—reaction set in. Scandal-mongers at Court and elsewhere lost no time in inventing, distorting, misrepresenting the *motif* that had precipitated the American adventure.

Much that Versailles voiced those feverish days, nineteenth century memoirs preserve, for were not their writers, for the most part, the warp and woof of Europe's most dissolute Court?

"Madame la Comtesse d'Hunolstein of the suite of Madame la Duchesse de Chartres was indirectly the cause of La Fayette joining the American insurgents," asserts *Mémoires Secrètes*. "Chagrined at his failure to win her from His Royal Highness, the Duc, who was madly in love with her, precipitated his flight."

Barrack-room gossip charged it to the Hotspur's revolt against his tardy advancement in the French Army.

Madame de Simiane, acclaimed "the prettiest woman in France" as well as "the loveliest and most charming lady of the Court," is variously credited with being La Fayette's inspiration. Of this charmer Monsieur Bardoux in *La Jeunesse de La Fayette* says: "Eighteenth century asserted its rights, and this model husband none the less inspired a very tender passion that turned into a faithful friendship." The memoirs of the Marquis de Condorcet recount that the "lady showed the noblest





MADAME LA COMTESSE D'AYEN, GREAT GRANDMOTHER  
OF MADAME DE LA FAYETTE

FROM A PRINT IN THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE



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feelings in making use of her influence over M. de La Fayette's heart and head; for she not only fired him with love of glory but bade him, at the age of eighteen years, leave *her* and seek it in America." In Madame Vigée-Lebrun's *Memoirs* we have: "Shortly before the Revolution I was visited by M. de La Fayette. He merely came to see the portrait I was painting of pretty Mme. de Simiane, whom he was said *to be looking after*." All of which has "an ancient, fish-like smell." How much of it—fire or smoke—percolated to Hôtel de Noailles from the Court, made up so largely of the young lovers' kin as Madame du Deffand reminded Horace Walpole, we shall never know. For judicious reticence developed as a fine art was of the Duchesse's curriculum, as charity and suspended judgment were the basis of her daughter's soul culture.

Nowhere in Adrienne's letters that escaped water, fire or sword, nowhere in her conversation at dinners or in salons is there a hint of how much she knew, how much her "deep self" registered during the subsequent days when her faith in man and God might well have been shaken to the core.

For it was a time when ladies of high society were distinguished by the audacity with which they made known their love affairs. "Intrigues," says the Marquise de La Tour du Pin, "were known soon as formed. When they endured they acquired a sort of consideration if not *éclat*."

"I do not think it possible to give an idea of my mother's way of loving," wrote her daughter, the Marquise de Lasteyrie. "It was peculiar to herself. Her affection for my father [La Fayette] predominated over every other feeling without diminishing any. It might be said that she felt for him the most passionate at-

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

tachment, if that expression were in harmony with the exquisite delicacy which kept her from any of the evil impulses generally attendant upon that feeling." Does not the statement imply that cause for jealousy was not wanting and, however ignored by Adrienne, the situation did not escape this discerning daughter? "Neither had she ever a moment of exactness. Never had my father a wish that inconvenienced her. In the depths of her heart she had no bitter feeling to conceal."

Before the year's end (December 24, 1779), Adrienne's happiness and that of her Gilbert, as the family called him, was crowned by the birth of their first and only son, christened George Washington de La Fayette. Worn out by the constant anxieties that had preceded his birth, the happy mother was not equal to nursing the infant, nor was she in condition to travel. Unknown to her, the resourceful Duchesse took the infant to Versailles, where she gave it the care that preserved its life. The heir was for Adrienne always an anxious, absorbing trust. In infancy, teething brought him close to death. Doctors gave him up, but the Duchesse's prayers prevailed. "Her faith was so great it put my faint-heartedness to shame," confessed Adrienne.

La Fayette, undaunted by his failure to invade England, returned to America (March 14, 1780). Both he and the Duc d'Ayen were spoiling to fight England. "The thought of seeing England crushed and humiliated makes me tremble with delight." He had sown the seed in the Court—aroused the Ministers—that matured into the famous expedition of Comte de Rochambeau. Adrienne's grief was greater than at the first departure. Her capacity for mental suffering had now become enlarged by her anxieties; her emotions so intensified by the charm of the moments they had together that another indefinite



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separation seemed beyond her endurance. She was now nineteen years old. With stronger impressions and thinking more profoundly, she had entered intimately, confidently into La Fayette's opinions, plans and dreams for humanity. Her mind thereafter was with his, as always was her heart. Nevertheless, the Virginia campaign was beyond all that she had suffered.

Scarcely had La Fayette sailed when the Vicomte de Noailles returned with his regiment from the West Indies. Immediately he set out with Rochambeau to reinforce Washington's army. His lovely wife was disconsolate. Her pride in the distinction the intrepid Vicomte later achieved in the Virginia campaign—which saved the Republic—was soon lost in grief over the death of their only child.

For a second time the devoted sisters were semi-widowed. In the loss of their first-born they had also a common sorrow. And for long now their blood pressure was to fluctuate to the *Gazette* reports from the American scene.

## CHAPTER XIII

### GLORY OF CONQUEST

THE *Gazette* was Adrienne's only source of information throughout the Virginia campaign. La Fayette was fighting not only for the cause and the glory of France, but for his own life. There was no time to write "Dear Heart." The *Gazette* painted his situation as desperate. England reported him killed.

Adrienne tried to conceal the most alarming features from her mother, in return for the care with which she had shielded her from the harrowing events of 1777. For the Duchesse had now her own emotional disturbances: death of a beloved sister and kindred domestic ruptures. But with all her heroic intent, Adrienne could not dissemble one-half of her anxiety! To spare her mother, she went with her sisters for a brief respite to Grandpère Fresnes' estate in Burgoyne. It had been a favorite childhood outing and was full of happy memories.

Not until the homeward journey did they hear, on the outskirts of Paris, of the capture of Yorktown, the surrender of Lord Cornwallis.

Vanished the "untold anguish" which, she told her daughter, the Virginia campaign had cost her. Forgotten were the nerve-racking suspense, the devastating tears! The ceaseless prayers for his protection were now turned to thanksgiving for the victory of him who had written her on assuming command at Washington's request: "It's an undertaking too big for me."

## GLORY OF CONQUEST

"The conduct of the Virginia campaign was so astonishing," she wrote, years after, "its success so prodigious, that we rendered thanks to him to whose talents it was due."

Above all, the sisters realized that in the surrender of Cornwallis, La Fayette and the Vicomte de Noailles were, for the time, released from the dangers of war. For the first time in seeming æons they breathed freely. The glad tidings had preceded them to Paris, and they found Hôtel de Noailles jubilant.

To the Vicomte de Noailles fell the distinction of settling with Lord Cornwallis the details of the surrender. The serene Louise, who, throughout the campaign as in every crisis of her brief, selfless life, had the supreme strength, the supreme peace that went with her to the guillotine, was elated with Paul's conduct. "So like him," chuckled Hôtel de Noailles, "to offer his lace handkerchief to Lord Cornwallis for a flag of truce!"

Always for Adrienne was the unexpected. Certainly the Monday afternoon (January 21, 1782) that she donned her most becoming costume and rode away in the stately Noailles coach—blooded horses, outriders, driver and footmen glistening in the traditional trappings of privileged servitude—she little dreamed the climax.

It was the birthday fête of the Dauphin. Since early morning, Versailles, all Paris and neighboring provinces had been gathering in festive garb and humor at the Hôtel de Ville. The nation's joy was as articulate and reverberant as the church bells that had rung out the tardy birth of the long-expected heir to the throne. Every window, every door and roof; every available sight-seeing niche flanking rue Saint-Honoré vibrated with life, color, and tumultuous joy.

Preceded by the King's Bodyguard, the flower of the



military, and two hundred royal carriages of the Court of Versailles, was the Queen in her glass coach. Slowly, majestically it wended from the gates of Paris through rue Saint-Honoré to the Hôtel de Ville. Closing up the brilliant procession were the Noailles and like coaches of the *ancien régime*.

Marie Antoinette was at her heyday. Never lovelier, never more gracious was the ill-fated daughter of the Cæsars. She had fulfilled the nation's expectations—brought forth an heir to the throne of the Bourbons. Happier in motherhood than ever in wifehood, she radiated its glory. *Vive la Reine* reverberated as loud and long as *Vive le Roi*. Even Nature, rarely indulgent to Paris fêtes, shone on King, bourgeoisie and peasantry alike the splendor of its mid-winter sparkle and sheen.

The official formalities were over, the merry-making well on, when a mounted courier dashed through the festive throng. To the master of ceremonies he brought a message. The pompous official broke the seal, wiped his brow, stepped onto the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville—balcony inseparable to this day from the glory, the shame of France—and proceeded to read: "The conqueror of Cornwallis—" He got no further. Pandemonium reigned. "—Is arrived this day in Paris," he shouted. The unexpectedness of the message's conclusion was electric. The fishwives of the Halles got wind of it.

"*La Fayette est arrivé! Le Marquis est chez lui!*" They broke from the Hôtel de Ville to the market. Armed with laurel branches *en masse* they marched to the Hôtel de Noailles, whither it was rumored La Fayette had gone. The same fishwives, increased a hundredfold, that later went with spikes and cannon to Versailles!



## GLORY OF CONQUEST

Adrienne could not believe her senses when the news was brought to her. The Queen, who had followed with liveliest interest La Fayette's every movement in America, was likewise skeptical. Assured at length that the hero was really back in Paris, she sought out Adrienne and personally conducted her in the royal carriage to Hôtel de Noailles. It was a gracious gesture, one after Paris' own heart; for otherwise Adrienne would have had to await the passing of the royal cortège before her coach could turn homeward—under the circumstances an insupportable delay.

What were the thoughts of Queen and subject as the royal coaches lumbered authoritatively through festive Paris to the floral ruffles of the Tuileries gardens? Side by side they sat—the crowned and the uncrowned—each destined for untoward tragedy. How far each had journeyed since Adrienne's presentation at Court! Marie Antoinette was then the Dauphiness, awaiting, under the martinet surveillance of Adrienne's aunt, the Maréchale de Mouchy, the demise of Louis XV when she would come into her own as Queen of France.

What were their inmost thoughts as their voluminous skirts brushed, their asking eyes met, and the coach rolled on? Did the Queen, we wonder, secretly envy the love-mad girl-wife, quivering with ill-concealed emotion? Did she envy her the possession of the "tall, big nosed, awkward, taciturn" Auvergne boy she had poked fun at in the dance, now come home a world hero?

Did memory bring back the shadow of a blush? Did it recall her amorous advances in the Little Trianon—a condescension for which comeliness, brains and wit sighed—and to-day's hero stubbornly ignored to the Queen's lasting pique, as some commentators would have us believe?

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As for Adrienne, hers was armor beyond the Queen's lance. The beloved awaited her. Her love, her faith in him were justified; her prayers answered; he had come back to his own.

At Hôtel de Noailles' great iron gate the royal pageant halted to let Adrienne down. The waiting women from the Halles clamorously broke through the sentineled gate and over the garden wall into the *cour d'honneur*. The gracious Queen, who was to despise this day's hero, and attribute—like all the Royalists—her every misfortune to him, proceeded to Versailles to the music of the Paris rabble's *Vive la Reine!* \* \* \* \*

La Fayette heard Adrienne's voice at the foot of the grand staircase. Brushing aside the assembled lackeys, he ran down the steps, gathered her to his heart and carried her to her chamber. His endearing words, the fishwives' approving cries, the plaudits of the surging crowds from the street were lost upon Adrienne. She had swooned from sheer joy!

## CHAPTER XIV

### DISCIPLINING EMOTION

THE happiness to recover him from such great danger; to find him with so much glory achieved—above all the charm of his presence—were felt by my mother with an extreme *vivacité*! [writes Virginia of La Fayette's unexpected return]. The excess of her feeling was such that for some months my father could not leave the room without making her ill. So live a passion frightened her. The idea that she might not always dissemble it became a troublesome obsession. . . . She feared to bore my father; to embarrass him in presence of others was appalling to her. For his sake alone she tried to moderate her feelings, to control if not suppress demonstrative affection.

Adrienne admitted in childhood she had enough to do to manage herself, which may account for her reluctance to reprove the faults of her younger sisters Pauline and Rosalie. How those *enfants terribles* quarreled and made up, then suddenly, about the age of twelve, developed a mutual admiration and sympathy that endured through every vicissitude; how instantaneously they took to religious practices, with continuous acts of piety, self-abnegation and boundless charity are unparalleled in childhood lore.

Rosalie, the youngest, was the most austere of the sisters, but her austerity never got beyond herself.

"I read in Rosalie's [Madame de Grammont] soul and she read in mine," records Pauline's [Madame de Montagu] journal. "She had nothing to learn from me and I had everything to learn from her. She encouraged



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me, she soothed me; she warned me timidly and almost blushingly of what she perceived reprehensible in me, and when she spoke to me I listened to her as to my own conscience with humility, docility, respect."

Unhappily for the biographer, Adrienne kept neither diary nor journal. If she had the habit, I find no trace of it. They may have gone up in smoke, as did her letters (covering La Fayette's American journeys) when gendarmes came to Chavaniac to arrest her.

In disciplining her heart to conceal her emotions over the Conquering Hero's return, had she noted each day's "faults, progress, resolutions," what nuts for the modern psychologist to crack! Had she kept tab on the consuming grand passion "ornamenting, purifying" her heart as was Madame de Montagu occupied (in her journal) in perfecting her soul, what revelation for Freudians! For rarely were the pride, the passion, the ardor of an introspective, selfless soul, a pure devotee, more sorely tried. . . .

Adrienne's *Life of the Duchesse d'Ayen* discloses that there was little in the love life of her mother and her power-grasping, pleasure-seeking father that escaped the "child taking notes." How she profited to her own serenity and peace of mind by what she saw, heard, surmised and was told by the Duchesse, her own love life succinctly substantiates.

The Duchesse's absorption in her children to the exclusion of the Duc; her indulgence of the interior life in which she reveled after the manner of the introspective, long blinded her to a cardinal duty of the married state. As duty was her watchword, its fulfillment, to her thinking, her excuse for being, the awakening to her remissness in pleasing the Duc was a *vrai bouleversement*. She reproached herself for her disregard of the



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need that Madame du Barry observed in him to be flattered and cajoled by the Court his "juicy wit" refreshed. That the Duc's love for his Duchesse exceeded hers for him was early apparent to Adrienne. She had witnessed her mother's tardy awakening to her self-centered interests; heard her self-upbraiding of her indifference to modish dress, her neglect of the arts and the coquetry as imperative to the Duc's ego as to the ego of every homo—cave or super—that woman, lovely or unlovely, would hold captive.

No sooner had the Duchesse's remissness in meeting the Duc's need penetrated her inner consciousness, than it came home as it were to roost. For Clotilde, her third daughter, the least colorful and individual of her children, failed to hold the affection—if ever she had it—of her engaging young husband, the Vicomte de Roure. The failure was to the Duchesse a radical shock. She had counted much on this union of her choice. The Vicomte was an only son. He shut himself up, shortly after marriage, with his adoring mother in the family ancestral château in Auvergne and refused to live with his young wife. It was an embarrassing situation. Separation, divorce for a Noailles, an Aguesseau or a Fresnes were inconceivable.

To the relief of family embarrassment, the Vicomte suddenly died of smallpox. The young widow speedily found consolation in a second marriage. As wife of the Marquis de Thesan, a rampant Royalist, she lived long enough to give birth to a daughter, and died in 1788.

"My mother neglected nothing to bring about the happiness of this unhappy daughter," Adrienne writes. "Mindful of her own negligence of my father, she exhorted her to be more careful to please M. de Roure; to study to be more attractive to his mother."

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Only when some great mutual interest agitated them, as the death of the Duchesse's tenderly loved sister, Madame du Sarron, was the Duc's attachment to his wife apparent. His just confidence was founded, like his tenderness, upon a profound esteem. "*It lived however in the interior.*" Quite modern! "Perhaps," observes Adrienne, "had my mother in her youth been less indifferent to the young man's superior reason; had she not been so neglectful of pleasing him, it might have been otherwise. . . . It is certain that in the little details of life she did not triumph enough over her natural indecision. My father always saw her indulging the scruples that pleased her best and irritated him most, and it did not always make for his or our happiness."

Adrienne in disciplining her own emotions in wake of La Fayette's triumphant return, and the crucial situations that came in its train, was largely indebted to her childhood observations. Like her mother, she had little natural inclination to Court life; no ambition to shine in the public eye. "But, however reluctant, once convinced it was her duty to be of the smart world," Virginia writes, "she threw aside all scruple and went in heart and soul for all the pleasure there was to be got out of it. She never wasted time in regrets over a decision once made."

There was at this crisis no *lettre de cachet* to hold the Conqueror of Cornwallis a *whole* week at Hôtel de Noailles! The day following his arrival in Paris finds him at the Court of Versailles. He was flatteringly received by the King. His Majesty lost no time in making him Maréchal de Camp. Honors poured upon him. The veteran Maréchal de Richelieu invited him to dine with all the Field Marshals of France. Never was youth

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—he was twenty-four—so universally and brilliantly acclaimed.

Was Adrienne with him at Gluck's "Iphigénie en Aulide" when the prima donna walked towards the box in which La Fayette sat, holding up the laurel crown intended (in the opera) for Achilles? Did she beam upon him at the Versailles masque ball in honor of the son of Russia's Catherine the Great, when Marie Antoinette, costumed after the painting "La Belle Gabrielle," graciously danced a quadrille with the world hero?

Of that spectacular event we know only that La Fayette—was it in memory of the Queen's favor?—named the slave plantation he subsequently bought at Cayenne, La Belle Gabrielle. And to Adrienne he intrusted its management, designed eventually to free the slaves. Daily it was her pride and her joy, so hard to control, so difficult to conceal, to see the *bien aimé* grow in the "general esteem and affection of Court and Nation," as Benjamin Franklin, then in Paris, wrote to General Washington. With every heart throb of those disciplinary days, she knew he was already what Franklin predicted he would be, "a great man." And in her code as in La Fayette's, a great man was inseparable from a good man.



## CHAPTER XV

### UNDER OWN VINE AND FIG TREE

**A**BIGAIL ADAMS "made her compliments to the Marquise de La Fayette" in the fall of 1784. She found the family established in a home of its own. The Marquis' daydream at Valley Forge was at last come true. Was it not from there he wrote his "Dearest Adrienne": . . . "Several of the General's officers have brought their wives to the Camp. I envy them—not their wives—but the happiness they enjoy in being able to see them. . . . General Washington has resolved to send for his wife. . . . Don't you think when I return we shall be old enough to establish ourselves in our own house, live there happily together, receive our friends?"

He had not taken any too kindly to living in Hôtel de Noailles, after the tribal custom of great families. But the Duchesse having consented to the marriage only on condition that the children remain with her there at least two years, there was no escaping the pre-nuptial agreement or—the Duchesse. As for Adrienne, it never occurred to her to question her mother's judgment. Evidently it was written in the stars, for, as we now know, no sooner was the marriage a *fait accompli* than the young benedict joined his regiment at Metz. Why the tender girl-wife, naturally distraught over so speedy a separation—the first of many in store—did not go with him, family and Court memoirs are silent.

In the American adventure that ensued—the first expedition covered two years—Adrienne was not equal, as



## UNDER OWN VINE AND FIG TREE

the wise Duchesse had foreseen, to child-bearing and the management of an establishment of her own. Neither suspected that the prescribed two years were to lengthen, as they did, to ten years before he was back for good from foreign venture; otherwise the original contract might have been less strenuously observed.

La Fayette was at Cadiz with a great French fleet, to force, with the co-operation of Spain, England's compliance with the surrender of Cornwallis, when the preliminaries of the final treaty reached him. "Humanity," he wrote, "has won its case and liberty will never more be without a place of refuge."

It was upon his return from Spain (1783) that he bought the house in rue de Bourbon—now rue de Lille—where Abigail Adams "made her compliments." It stood near the corner of rue de Bourgoyne, in the neighborhood of many fine old residences of the noblesse.

In purchasing the property and expending one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in enlarging and furnishing it for extensive entertainment, he may have sensed the career that Franklin predicted awaited him. On one wall of its grand salon hung a facsimile of the American Declaration of Independence with the signers' autograph signatures. On the other wall space awaited, he said, "the Declaration of the Rights of Man," which La Fayette was the first to formulate in Europe, and of which he was immensely proud.

During his absence in America, he had paid "Dear Papa" d'Ayen an annual *pension alimentaire* of eight thousand pounds—about forty thousand American dollars. So a home of his own, aside from independence, seemed somewhat of an economic gesture, but it was far from it, for the hospitality of the Hôtel was boundless.

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From its upper windows, Adrienne could see the tree-tops of the gardens of Hôtel de Noailles, from which she was now separated for the first time. Daily she visited her mother, or the latter came to her, for the Duchesse had now only the widow Roure and her youngest daughter Rosalie in the great house of rue Saint-Honoré. For Rosalie was not to be precipitated into matrimony. Until her nineteenth year, she rejected many brilliant suitors. Then, unlike her sisters, she made her own choice. He was the Marquis de Grammont, sympathetic with La Fayette's Republicanism. That happiness is not to be had in this world was Rosalie's conviction. It behooves one to avoid, so far as possible, situations, complications that make for discomfort, friction, mental unrest. In the Marquis apparently she got what she wanted.

Adrienne saw as little of La Fayette, this year in their new home, as she had in Hôtel de Noailles, for no sooner were they settled than he was off to America on a six-month tour. Everywhere, to her delight, he was acclaimed with "affection and cheers," which was balm to the love she now had under judicious control.

Abigail Adams tells us that the family at this time was complete in three children: Anastasie, aged seven, George Washington de La Fayette, aged five, and Marie Antoinette Virginia, aged three. Born the epochal year of La Fayette's return in 1782 as the Conqueror of Cornwallis, and Marie Antoinette's personal escort of Adrienne to Hôtel de Noailles, the youngest child's baptismal name commemorated for the parents both the Queen and the Virginia campaign.

"The Marquise is a middle-sized lady, sprightly, speaks English with tolerable ease and professes great attachment for America," wrote Abigail to Braintree,

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Massachusetts. "She kissed me on both cheeks and presented me to her mother, the Duchesse d'Ayen, and her sister, the Vicomtesse de Noailles, all of whom were sitting in a bedroom quite *en famille*." The Vicomtesse, we are told, was "knitting, and the Marquise wore a chintz gown."

Of this visit, the diary of twenty-year-old Abby, Abigail's daughter, goes further:

We went to pay our respects to Madame, the Marquise de La Fayette. We were shown to the ladies in their rooms. Madame, her mother, and youngest sister [Rosalie, later the Marquise de Grammont] were sitting in an unceremonious way with their work in that social manner of which we *boast* in America. She received us very civilly and cordially, with great ease and goodness, and very politely apologized for not waiting upon us first. She speaks English a little. She is very agreeable and pleasant. I had always heard she was handsome. [Had Papa gossiped?] I do not think her so. [Abby was at the hypercritical age.] She was not painted and very little dressed.

Papa might have truthfully written home to Brainerd that the Marquise was "handsome," for when he first met her she was still in her teens. Adams had gone to Hôtel de Noailles with Franklin and Silas Dean, America's agents in Paris, to express personally and publicly to the Marquise their appreciation of La Fayette's service in bringing about the happy success of their mission—the Franco-American treaty.

What impression did the trio of democracy wielders, Franklin in fustian and coon-skin cap, make upon the young aristocrat in process of Americanization? Did she think them worth all she had suffered, sacrificed? We wonder!

Did they find her handsome, clever, charming? No-



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where in their letters or speech, as nowhere in La Fayette's voluminous correspondence, not even in her *Life* by her daughter, the Marquise de Lasteyrie, nor the memoirs of contemporaries, have I found a clue to Madame de La Fayette's personal appearance.

What was the color of her strikingly large, asking eyes; the texture or tint of her skin? Her hair, was it blonde or brunette? Her features, delicate or strong?

How La Fayette's facile pen could spill over in praise of the American women that fairly stormed him in Philadelphia drawing-rooms without making comparison and passing it on to the advantage of "Dear Heart" and remain the Frenchman he was, is more than passing strange.

It is to the Adamsses—Abigail and Abby—that posterity is mainly indebted for the little it has of the physical make-up of America's uncompromising champion in its darkest hour. Pictorially, I find nothing outside a miniature—the sweet, alert, questioning face of unawakened youth—painted about the time of her marriage; and an engraving by Hüytot obviously made from possibly the only oil portrait extant. The latter, to-day the possession of Monsieur François de Corcelle, is said to have been painted when she was in her twenty-sixth year. It reveals, however, more of the serene, resigned maturity of a much later period.

Presumably, the miniature which La Fayette wore round his neck from her death to his own and which is buried with him in Picpus Cemetery, is the original. The known reproductions, including the print in the Bibliothèque Nationale, must have been made from the original during the General's lifetime. In the fascinating family gallery of Château de Chavaniac, preserved intact to 1910, there was no portrait of our Madame



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de La Fayette. Accidentally, I discovered on the back of a secret panel, a crude print from the Hüytot plate. Evidently, it was made from the same plate, the property of the Marquis de Lasteyrie, from which the print here reproduced came later to me. Unquestionably, it was made from the Corcelle painting. Nowhere in family letters or memoirs have I found mention of Adrienne posing for a portrait or reference to portraits of the family in any medium.

Anastasie we know had no little skill with the pencil. Her amusing drawing made in Olmütz of the comic old soldier who served their disgusting meals hung for some years on the door of the General's library at La Grange. . . .

Let us go back to the Adamses.

The "middle-sized" Marquise promptly returned the Adamses' call and came shortly to a dinner in her honor at Hôtel de Rohan, the spacious house and gardens John Adams leased at Auteuil. This was the near-Paris home that wore Abigail's New England thrift to a frazzle in effort to keep up appearances and reflect credit upon our Government within the paltry salary the Congress paid its agent, John Adams.

"No lady of our country would go abroad so little dressed as the Marquise de La Fayette," Abigail wrote to Braintree of this dinner. "Little" in this instance did not imply as it might easily to-day, that the lady was near nude. "One of the fine American ladies whispered to me," continues Abigail, "'Good heavens! How horribly she is dressed!' Although I despise whispering, I could not refrain from saying, 'The Lady's rank sets her above the little formalities of dress.'" Then we learn, as did Braintree (with more approval, perhaps, than moderns would give) that the Marquise wore a

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brown Florence with petticoat; it was the season of satin—was Florence wool or cotton?—"a plain double gauze handkerchief"—probably the fichu of the Corcelle painting and Hüyt print—"pretty cap with white ribbons, the whole very neat." Observe Abigail does not say chic or becoming. Fancy a twentieth century woman of thirty or sixty dining at home or abroad in a cap!

"The American ladies," Abigail goes on, "glistened with diamonds, watch chains, girdles and buckles." Had they known that Adrienne's jewels from La Fayette's mother, aside from the Noailles inheritance, were worth a king's ransom, doubtless some one would have asked her why she did not wear them. "But the little Marquise in cap and 'kerchief," observes Abigail, "was in no wise ruffled by her very different appearance, such is the ease of manner of a really well-bred French lady. It is studied by them as an art and they render it nature."

The Marquise's poise on this occasion was less art and more acquiescence to the prevalent French mode, for no lady dined out in *grande toilette*. They sometimes coiffed, the delightful Marquise de La Tour du Pin tells us, but never would they go abroad at midday arrayed as was Abigail's American company. French quality dined about two-thirty in the afternoon; rarely later than three o'clock. Men never wore evening clothes or uniform. After dinner the ladies retired to dress. It was an elaborate ritual. The men in embroidered or plain clothes waited—sometimes assisted in the ritual—to escort them to theatre or opera, where the curtain went up at the hour modern America dines.

That the "middle-sized" Marquise at this first Adams dinner was "not rouged artistically as the American ladies present" may seem at first a bit disconcerting, for

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Paris, then as now, was past master in the art of make-up. Abby's diary throws an interesting sidelight: "There is scarce a greater offence against delicacy than to go into company with a *little* powder on your face; it is almost the criterion of decency; but at the same time a lady will put an *ounce* or *two* of rouge upon her face, and even think she is not dressed without it."

The decade before Abby's observation, Madame Vigée-Lebrun painted three portraits of an infamous courtesan and writes: "The Comtesse du Barry did not rouge." She was then forty-five. Her predecessor in royal favor, the Pompadour, was guileless of lipstick. In lieu she "bit her pale lips to the desired rose, to their injury and fastidious spectators' annoyance."

"The Queen [Marie Antoinette] was so painted, as were the Ladies of her Court," writes an English contemporary (1787), "that I absolutely started when she entered the chapel at Versailles. White is laid on quite thick and the red is splashed on it without the least imitation of nature. Except at a Puppet Show I never saw anything like it in England."

The tyranny of rouge pursued the ill-starred Queen to the guillotine; for, when the headsman held up her blood-dripping head for the rabble's delectation, "the rouge stood out from the bloodless face in huge blotches on either cheek."

Again Abby: "To avoid singularity and the observation of the company she goes into, Mrs. Bingham wears more rouge than is advantageous to her."

Mrs. Bingham, née Willing, looms large in Abby's diary. The young Puritan cannot withhold her admiration of the Philadelphia beauty, despite her penchant for gambling, and a way she had of monopolizing Abby's dinner escorts. The dazzling young matron shares with



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the Marquise de La Fayette in the young girl's critical acumen.

The toasted beauty of foreign courts is as frequently met at Hôtel de La Fayette as at the Adams dinners. As Ann Willing had she not danced at sweet sixteen in Philadelphia drawing-rooms with the Vicomte de Noailles, the Comte de Ségur and like rebels, including the Marquis? Little did the woman of fashion or the "little dressed" Marquise chatting at the Adams dinners foresee that it was in the banking house of Bingham & Co. that the Vicomte de Noailles, bereft by the guillotine, was to retrieve his fortune.

The Adamses and La Fayettees saw much of each other, and every contact strengthened the agreeableness of the first impression.

Abigail wrote at length to Braintree of the Marquise's personal devotion to her children, "so unlike ladies of high rank in Europe," and Abby peppers her diary with like encomiums: "The fondness that the Marquise discovers for her children is very amiable; and the more remarkable in a country where the least trait of such a disposition is scarce known."

The Adamses were wholly unaware of the Duchesse d'Ayen's pedagogy, which Adrienne imbibed, enlarged and humanized. They would scarcely have grasped it, so far was it beyond what obtained or rather failed to obtain in pre-Revolutionary Massachusetts. For the New England "female of the species" was then denied book-learning. Girls had yet to be permitted by special "obliqueness" to stand outside the schoolhouse and listen through door or window to the boys reciting.

"She seems to adore her children," continues Abby, "and to live in them. Both speak English and sing it." Of their singing, Gouverneur Morris notes later



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in his journal, the day after his arrival in Paris (February 3, 1789): "After dinner one of the little girls (Anastasie) sang a song for me. It happened to be one of my own compositions. Madame is a very agreeable good woman."

"This trifling incident," adds Jared Sparks, "flattered Morris." That the "happened" was due to Adrienne's consummate tact and grace born of the desire to please, Morris little suspected; and after close contacts of a long Paris sojourn and in spite of his generally acute perception and liberal understanding, he never grasped Madame de La Fayette *au fond*. Her aristocracy frustrated him, her spirituality wholly eluded him.

Of a rue de Bourbon dinner, restricted to a circle of Americans, Abby, now somewhat weaned of Puritanic inhibitions, laments:

It was intended a compliment to us, but I had rather it had been thought so to introduce French company. . . . The Marquis had ordered that the children should not be presented. He thought the attention paid to them rather a compliment to him and his lady than any pleasure the company could derive from their presence; but mama requested that they might be introduced, and they came. The Marquis said it was his intent to send his son, when he was fitted, to Harvard College.

The boy was at this time six years old.

While Abby throws illuminating sidelights upon the Marquise, she misses frequent opportunity to correct her own pardonable ignorance of Catholicism, to which unhappily she had her first introduction in godless Paris.

"We had a sumptuous dinner [Hôtel de Rohan]. It is now Lent and the French are *doomed* to fish. Our French servants have *purchased* themselves dispensation for eating meat *because they live with us*. However in-

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credible this may appear it is a fact." How far from fact it was Abby might have learned from the Marquise, and henceforth been able to differentiate intelligently between the faith that the Noailles and myriads lesser known noblesse *lived* and the travesty of it that the Talleyrands, Rohans, Nerbonnes and like so-called "Princes of the Church" enacted, to the scandal of Christendom.

At this fish dinner, "the Marquise de La Fayette was quite sociable with Papa and professed to be a physiognomist. She would not allow that I [Abby] was *triste* but *grave*."

Another time we find Madame de La Fayette expressing her fondness for Mrs. Jay, whose resemblance to Marie Antoinette was so striking that on entering a Paris theatre, the audience rose and remained standing until the mistake was discovered.

"Mrs. Jay and I thought alike," Abby reports Madame de La Fayette saying. "It was Mrs. Jay's sentiment that pleasure might be found abroad, but happiness found only at home." She told Papa that Mrs. Jay did not like the French ladies. "Neither do I," said she; having in mind, no doubt, the Queen's gambling set and their imitators in Paris salons. "From the account she had heard of the American ladies she believed she would be pleased with them, and should the Marquis ever again visit America"—he was just back from the Mount Vernon sojourn General Washington had invited Adrienne to share—"she would accompany him."

Again we read: "The Marquise with her son and daughter drove out from Paris to tea with us. Taking leave, Madame *saluted* [kissed on both cheeks] Mama and me. Lately she has taken this *liberty* when meeting or parting."

Shortly the education of George Washington de La

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Fayette broke in upon Adrienne's continuously increasing social duties. She was now inseparable from the complicated political issues in which La Fayette was rapidly coming to the front. His amazing, adventurous youth was over. He would now establish in France the liberty and equality controlled by law and order that he had learned from Washington and the leaders of American independence.

My mother regarded it her first duty to instruct my brother in Christian doctrine and morals [writes Virginia], and to find a way to make his heart relish them. Whatever obstacle the times offered against the accomplishment of this duty, there was no sacrifice at any price that she did not make to have her son well instructed. At the same time, she wished to fulfill the intention of my father and to respond to his confidence in her judgment. She believed that with an upright heart knowledge led to an acquaintance with God. . . . She chose for George with my father's approval [it was a most fortunate choice] M. Frestel, his old Collège du Plessis tutor. The great affairs that absorbed my father at this time, the many distractions of our rue de Bourbon home, she feared might give rise to vanity and hurt his education. Convinced that she judged rightly, my mother made a most painful sacrifice. She rented for M. Frestel and his pupil [George was now past six years] a little house in rue Saint-Jacques. There she daily visited him. As for the rest of us we were happy to remain near her.



## CHAPTER XVI

### SALON OF THE PATRIOTIC PARTY

**A**DRIENNE took advantage of the Marquis' absence in America, to journey the summer of 1784 to Château de Chavaniac, his birthplace. It was her first visit. With her went the Duchesse d'Ayen, Clotilde, now widow de Roure, Rosalie and the three children. Tutors, governesses and maids, the whole was a formidable invasion of the gloomy old fortress.

This first meeting of the Noailles women with the Marquis' aunt, Madame de Chavaniac, the Château's chatelaine, was fraught with more moment than they suspected. As for Adrienne, she attached herself warmly to Aunt Louise-Charlotte, who was virtually the Marquis' mother. She gave to the strong-willed old Auvergnant a "filial devotion that had a great place in her life." How great, it was for neither to divine, as together they explored the ancient Château with half its living suites dismantled since the passing of the Marquis' mother, grandmother, Aunt Dumottier and his lovely cousin, Aunt Chavaniac's only child, whom the Marquis loved "as never was a sister."

Through the long summer days, the children frolicked in the woods or by the Château brook fed by mountain streams; Clotilde and Rosalie drank of the mountain air to their lasting invigoration. For Adrienne and the Duchesse there was much leisurely jolting in the old family break over the province the Marquis would vigorously canvass upon his return from America for his



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election by the Provincial Assembly as Auvergne representative to the Notables.

Aunt Chavaniac as guide was in her element. She knew every foot of Auvergne. To recount its past was to relive her youth. As the break jolted over the historic ground sentineled by sombre blue-veiled mountains, topped here, dotted there with ancestral châteaux, the Parisian-bred Noailles' interest quickened to enthusiasm. Between Brioude and Le Puy, towns to be seared in Adrienne's memory, Aunt Chavaniac saluted a château perched upon the highest mountain. "It was built in 1400 by the Maréchal de La Fayette," she said.

"He married my kinswoman, Mademoiselle de Chavaniac, when she was twelve years old. They had twelve children and she inherited the château in which Gilbert was born and where I have lived since."

Not a town, not a hamlet but was story for the robust old guide. Adrienne with care-free joy drank in the whole to relive it in the bitter-sweet of after days. This first visit to the Château to be irrevocably interwoven with her destiny, was followed by frequent brief sojourns until Adrienne could visualize every move in the Marquis' political campaign and understand the obstacles he encountered *almost* as intelligently as Gouverneur Morris, who wrote Washington:

He had to contend with the prejudices and interests of his order, and with the influence of the Queen and Princes (except Duc d'Orléans), but he was too able for his opponents. He played the orator with as much *éclat* as ever; he acted the soldier and is at this moment [April 29, 1789] as much envied and hated as ever his heart could wish. He is also much loved by the nation, for he stands forward as one of the principal champions of her rights.

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Were Adrienne offspring of this age how she would have rallied Auvergne! Not after the manner of a Lady Astor and like women of the British aristocracy, perhaps, but as effectively and in a way quite her own. For, as Virginia stresses: "While my mother frankly adopted and openly professed liberal opinions, she conserved a delicacy difficult to indicate, but which prevented her from being what one would call a Party Woman."

She was not to be confounded, for instance, with the "First Platform Lady," Madame de Staël. Nevertheless, a dominant note in the rue de Bourbon salon was Necker's brilliant daughter, whom Napoleon dubbed, and not without reason, "a hurricane in petticoats." That "strenuous fisher of men," whom Gouverneur Morris modestly charges (in his journal) of wasting on him a "luring eye," was acceptable to Adrienne because of her loyalty to La Fayette, her unceasing advocacy of his Republican principles and her boundless admiration of Aunt Comtesse de Tessé, whom Staël declared, in and out of print, "the greatest mind I ever met."

With La Fayette's election to the Notables, his vice-presidency of the National Assembly, his command of the National Guard, the growing unrest throughout the provinces, and the daily increase of Paris factions, the hôtel in the rue de Bourbon leaped into European limelight. It was the rendezvous of the Republican or Patriotic Party; eventually the clearing house of liberal ideas, the cradle of numerous abortive constitutions that would impose upon monarchical France a democratic form of government, for which basically it was unprepared.

From soldiering, in which he had proved his genius and won world applause—so dear to his heart—La Fayette had plunged into politics, of which he knew nothing. He was not without a certain strategy and

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cunning, but of politics' basic principle, which Disraeli declared "nine-tenths was compromise," he had not the first iota. "He loved truth beyond everything" and "offended political parties without convincing them"; for where his principles were involved compromise was constitutionally beyond him. Never, perhaps, in consequence, has liberty had so doggedly uncompromising a champion or one whose reward was more tragic.

Adrienne was now mistress of a salon that vied in crowds, if not in wit and brilliancy, with the famous Republican salon of the Comtesse de Tessé in rue d'Alger.

"I go to the La Fayette's". Too many people," begins to pepper Gouverneur Morris's *Diary*. Where the ubiquitous American busybody upon his arrival in Paris for long held center stage, he begins to find himself more and more—to his pique—of the crowd. It hurts. He protests. "The Madame was chilly. . . . Madame tells me I am an aristocrat," which proved her perspicacity, for eventually the French press charges him with being the "agent of the aristocrats." Subtly the charge works for his recall when, on the retirement of Jefferson, Gouverneur Morris succeeds him (June, 1792) as United States minister.

Later, not finding La Fayette or the Madame at home to listen to his interminable suggestions, his explicit instructions of how they should run not only the National Guard but His Majesty, we read: "Chat a little with Madame de La Fayette, who receives me much better than she used to do. I know not why. Perhaps I have contracted more of that *tournure* to which she has been habituated. . . ." How she would have smiled had she suspected the snob's grievance!

Physically, Adrienne was in the flower of womanhood.



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Hers were the poise, the surety, the unconscious authoritativeness of centuries of dominant forebears: field marshals, cardinals, princes—all past masters of the diplomacy, tact and charm of the *haut monde*. But so inherent were the nobility and sweetness of her character, so habitual her spirituality, that she charmed the most obdurate of the motley throng, much of which must have offended her fine sensibilities, violated all the traditions of her birth and upbringing. It was the uprightness of her mind and heart, her impregnable patriotism, her unshaken faith in the right of every human being to liberty, freedom, equality under the law as in the Kingdom of God, that saw her through this crucible and every subsequent clash of flesh and spirit. Hers was the judicial mind of the famous Chancellor, her great-grandfather, Henri d'Aguesseau. Primarily, it was a mind singularly free from prejudice and bigotry of every kind. The habit to discuss everything, which the Duchesse d'Ayen encouraged in all her daughters, had full play in the rue de Bourbon salon, to which flocked every shade of opinion: political, philosophical, religious. She held her own at the Marquis' generous dinners—they kept open house—to which came the "greatest minds and the greatest sycophants of Europe." Happily, to conversational charm, nature added the rarer gift of "ravishing listener."

Madame de La Fayette's salon flourished—well to remember—in what Madame de Staël called

the Golden Age of the Revolution [1788-1791], when at no time and in no age was the art of talking in all its forms so remarkable. . . . In England at this period [observes the Genevan], women were accustomed to be silent before men when politics was the subject of conversation. In France women were accus-

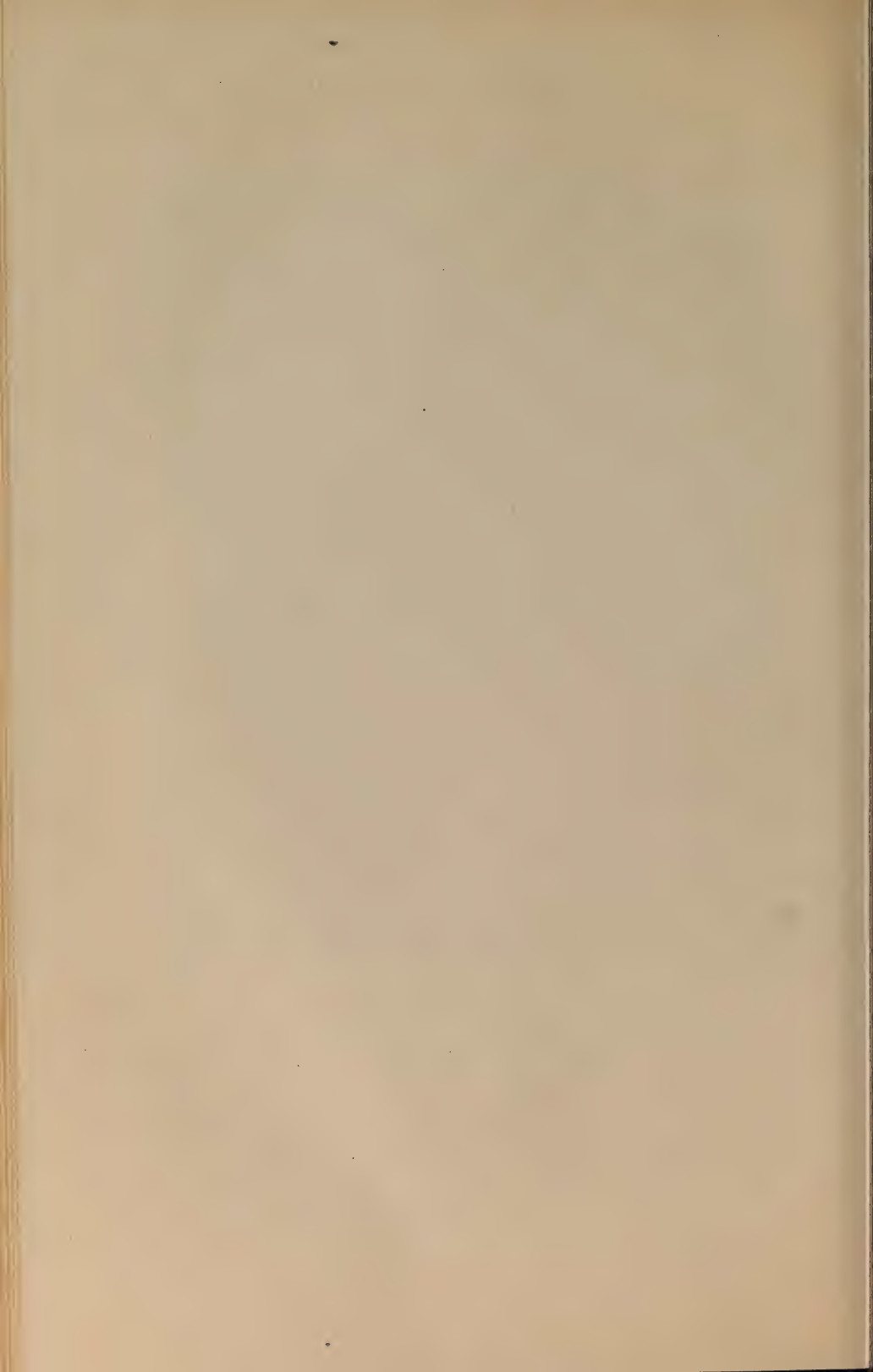




*Photograph by Girardon*

MADAME DE LA FAYETTE

FROM A PORTRAIT IN THE POSSESSION OF M. FRANÇOIS DE CORCELLE  
A GREAT GRANDSON OF LA FAYETTE



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tomed to lead almost all the conversation that took place in their homes. From childhood their minds were formed to the facility salon leadership requires.

It was by the painful reasoning of a solid mind, illumed and sustained by unquenchable love, sacred and profane, that Adrienne came through this period to wise understanding of La Fayette the man, the reformer, the dreamer; and to intelligent comprehension of the nation's ills. If in things political she was his echo, as some historians would have us believe, the reverberation was far from thoughtless or indiscriminate. True, she was indebted to him for her awakening to social conditions and the national situation. But as chaos widened and deepened between throne, Government and nation, she was the first to see the futility of American liberty in monarchical France; to vision it as did "that Don Quixote" was beyond her. And while the vacillating King and the distraught Government muddled to the nation's undoing, she studied, worked and prayed in her subtle, unobtrusive way to clarify La Fayette's dream of a French Republic which his life in America had converted into a ruling passion.

"She seized the difficulties of political situations as they rose," writes Virginia, "and studied them seriously."

If she escaped brain-storm in the process, she fared better than has many a student and historian of the French Revolution. For never in modern times, in any age or country, perhaps, were conditions so complicated, never greater confusion in every phase of politics; never issues so bewilderingly entangled, leaders more vacillating or corrupt, general morals so prostrate.

Parties rose and fell overnight. "Having achieved



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what they advocated, the leaders fought each other for supremacy." The opinions that divided constitution-makers and memoir writers continue to this day to plague historians and students of the French Revolution.

In interest of clarity let us, with the perspective of more than a hundred and forty years, try to pick our way through some of the amazing entanglements that Adrienne met face to face.

## CHAPTER XVII

### IN TABLOID

**E**DMUND BURKE in the English Parliament denounced La Fayette as "Father of the French Revolution." He was no more its father than was "that Austrian woman," Marie Antoinette, its mother.

True, La Fayette was of the Assembly of the Notables summoned by the King, at the behest of the Minister of Finance, for counsel and help in averting the bankruptcy that faced the nation. One hundred and forty-four distinguished nobles, bishops, presidents of parliaments (notoriously jealous of their rights), and mayors of cities comprised the Assembly. La Fayette's name—he was the youngest noble—because of his well-known revolutionary and Republican ideas, was originally scratched out by the court, then restored against his will to the chosen list.

The Assembly which the King opened in person, May, 1787, had no legal authority. It could only suggest. La Fayette, knowing this, openly disclaimed the Notables' power to tax the people. So serious were the accusations he brought against the Crown for the appalling increase of the public debt—accusations brought designedly to force the King to accept certain constitutional rights—that His Majesty, on hearing of them, demanded they be put in writing and signed. This La Fayette did, winding up his seven points—trenchant as Woodrow Wilson's fourteen—with: "This seems to me an appropriate time for us to supplicate His Majesty to bring all

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these matters to a happy issue by the convocation of a National Assembly."

"What, sir," cried out the Comte d'Artois, "are you asking for the States-General?"

"Yes, Monseigneur, and even more than that."

"Do you wish me to write down and carry to the King the words: 'M. de La Fayette proposes to convoke the States-General?' "

"Yes, Monseigneur."

The Notables were shortly dismissed, and two years later, May, 1789, the States-General convened. It was the first time in one hundred and seventy-five years that this nearest to a representative legislative body had met. It was the last resort to authorize financial changes which the King dared not, as formerly, enforce merely by royal decree.

Louis XV had never consented to call the States-General. He knew it would be the abnegation of monarchy. Marie Antoinette heard the call of Louis XVI and despised it.

The opening of the States-General at Versailles, May 5, 1789, like the shot at Fort Sumter (April 11, 1861) "reverberated round the world." As the Sumter shot fixed the opening of our Civil War, the call for the States-General settled for historians the opening of the French Revolution. Undeniably, La Fayette instigated the revival of that obsolete institution; but, as Sully so wisely observes, "revolutions that arrive in Great States are never an effect of chance nor the caprice of the people."

France was a Great State, the cultural arbiter of eighteenth century Europe, as Louis XIV was of the preceding century. She was the product of eight centuries of monarchical government. Up to the consecra-

tion of Louis XVI, the consent of the people had always been laid on the basis of the right of the sovereign to the throne.

It was the monstrous abuse of that right by royalty, noblesse and clergy, through the eras of feudalism, despotism and the so-called representative government of eighteenth century France, that begot the Revolution. One of the most astute and scholarly of modern historians maintains it was inevitable, which is tantamount to recognizing that God intended it. "Every error and insufficiency in those directing its inception were permitted, and, on account of such insufficiency, the full force of a military people ran freely as run natural things, and achieved what we know." It's hard to gainsay it. . . . But incomprehensible to this modern day is a people to endure as did serf, peasant, and later the bourgeoisie (middle-class industrialists), the burdens, injustices, cruelties imposed; to submit to the muzzling of conscience, thought, speech, censoring of the press, atrocities of the rack, the *lettre de cachet* which enabled the King and his ministers to arrest, exile, transport or imprison for life any man or woman without even the form of a trial. These and like atrocities and monopolies, the common people—the nation's producers, hewers of wood and carriers of water—had not only endured to their continuous impoverishment and degradation, but to the ever-increasing enrichment of a luxurious, indolent, arrogant, hereditary, privileged order. The monarchy's unconsidered under-dog for seeming æons was France's commonalty. Spasmodically it protested, here and there in the provinces, with secret revolts and frequent deadly passages of arms, without betterment of conditions. Then came America's Declaration of Independence. Miracle-like the wrongs and needs of the whole nation



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found audible articulation—an articulation never again to be silenced.

Louis XVI, who came to the throne one month after the La Fayette marriage, was a clean, upright prince of average ability. He sincerely loved his people, but he was without imagination or state-craft. A heavy, vacillating, slow-going character, his was the misfortune of always doing his best a little too late. Neither he nor his Queen, Marie Antoinette, beautiful, uneducated, ignorant of politics or the crying needs of the time, would willingly undertake the reforms imperative to the nation's preservation.

Realizing this, as did La Fayette, the King's ministers by 1788 had to tell His Majesty the treasury was bankrupt, and force him to call the States-General. It was an unprecedented, drastic measure, for the States-General, as we know, was an obsolete institution; but there was no other alternative. Taxes had been forced to the limit; credit was exhausted. The goose that had laid the golden egg for centuries, the dumb-driven peasantry, spurred by an awakened industrial middle-class, refused longer to hatch or to be incubated at behest of a worn-out *ancien régime*.

The liberal ideas his American experience and association with Washington had enforced upon La Fayette, and which the Patriotic Party embodied, were largely identical with those entertained the years immediately preceding the Revolution "by the better part of the upper classes." Aside from this enlightened minority, impregnated with the philosophies of Voltaire, Rousseau, Condorcet, and others, the belief was general that the reforms of the Patriotic Party would work for the immediate relief and subsequent betterment of all classes; and they saw it achieved without any violent social up-

## IN TABLOID

heaval. No one dreamed—certainly not the La Fayettees—the price France was to pay for what eventually established for all citizens “personal liberty, right of property and right of personal safety.”

Having enjoyed these rights, can the American of to-day conceive what life would be without them?

## CHAPTER XVIII

### RECIPROCITY

**R**ARE the alliance, conjugal or otherwise, that fitted so effectively into the scheme of things as the marriage of the La Fayettees.

From his first break for America, Adrienne, as we have seen, could have thwarted him at every turn, and brought him back to Court, army and family in disgrace. The power of the King and his ministers; the wealth, the prestige and the love of an invincible family were hers, to be wielded against the runaway-husband in his seeming wild goose chase across seas to fight for the glory he would have for the France of his forebears, the liberty of all humanity.

Likewise it was hers to discourage, if not to crush or turn to ridicule, his effort in Cayenne to liberate the "black portion of the human race." As for his proposal in the Assembly of Notables to grant civil rights to Protestant clergy, the cards, as it were, were in her hands to retard, make or break his championship of a movement he inaugurated.

Were Adrienne's the petty, grasping, unfeeling soul of a Marie Louise; the vain, self-centered exactions of an ego avid for place in the sun; in short, had she been brainless or visionless beyond the day's happening, anything but the spiritual force she was, might not La Fayette's career and America's independence have been another story?

Futile to conjecture the disaster a less liberal minded,

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a less valiant soul might have wrought in the life of a man whose main foible at this period, to quote Jefferson, was "a canine appetite for popularity; but he will get above it." His foibles born of a childish vanity and a cocksureness no one knew as did "Dear Heart"; no one understood as she the nobility of the La Fayette who voiced *and meant it*: "It is my ambition to be above ambition."

Liberation of the black race from slavery, abolition of the slave trade did not originate in America. Nor was it original with La Fayette. The idea may have come to him from England, as did the Angloisms that caught Paris' fancy before the Franco-American alliance. For as early as 1783, English Quakers had formed a society for the liberation of Negro slaves in the West Indies. Pennsylvania Quakers and the Moravians, among whom La Fayette convalesced after the Battle of Brandywine, were imbued with the injustice of dealing in human flesh. He may have been impressed by their placid protests against slavery. However or wherever the germ was caught, it took with La Fayette profoundly. For no sooner had Washington retired, Cincinnatus-like, to his Mount Vernon farm, than La Fayette proposed that they buy together

a small estate where we can make the experiment of enfranchising the Negroes and employing them only as farm hands. Such an example given by you might well be generally followed. If we succeed in America, I shall joyfully devote a part of my time to make this idea fashionable in the Antilles. If this be a crazy plan I had rather be crazy in this fashion than be wise for contrary conduct.

The "crazy plan" materialized in Cayenne, a plantation in French Guiana, South America, which he bought



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for one hundred and twenty-five thousand livres. Brand Whitlock's brilliant biography, *La Fayette*, gives this plausible explanation of the origin:

Comte de Ségur on his way home to America stopped at San Domingo to visit a plantation he owned there. He brought back an account of the dissolute white society and the tortures of his own unhappy negro slaves that made them all shudder in the house of Noailles. The Marquis was indignant and having no slaves of his own to emancipate, he at once bought some in French Guiana where he acquired a plantation near Cayenne.

In this enterprise Adrienne was with him heart and soul, and to her enthusiasm and zeal in forwarding it may be credited the soubriquet "Ardent Adrienne." Like most reformers of that unsettled age of whimsies and muddled thinking, neither Adrienne nor La Fayette knew anything of the psychology of the Negro race. They were as blissfully ignorant of the anthropology or sociology involved as were their theoretical philosopher associates. Racial statistics, research bureaus, biological laboratories and like modern essentials to "crash a gate" to the human cosmos were to them "undiscovered country." La Fayette's lode star in this, as in every turn in his quixotic career, was liberty, freedom of the human race. As for Adrienne, she was actuated by the same missionary spirit that prompted Isabella to equip Christopher Columbus for discovery of a New World. As Ferdinand's Queen would have the Genoese navigator christianize the North American savages, Adrienne would bring knowledge of God to the benighted black man, preparatory to giving him freedom.

In the Société des Amis des Noirs, founded (1788) by Brissot and other philosophic minds, to emancipate Negroes, the La Fayettees were active members. It was

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at its seances Adrienne first met Brissot, to whom it was her fate, when he subsequently became leader of the Girondins in the Assembly, to plead, almost on her knees, for her own freedom!

As La Fayette became more and more enmeshed in the march of events, he handed over to Adrienne the administration of La Belle Gabrielle, as the Cayenne plantation was called. So devouring was her zeal for good that she was ever seeking means to put it promptly into practice. And Cayenne offered work after her own heart. . . .

Where in England and America the motor power for the abolishment of slavery was religious, in France, as the Société des Amis des Noirs demonstrated, it was prompted solely by enthusiasm for liberty and humanity. Madame de La Fayette, to the contrary, worked primarily to instruct the plantation Negroes in the first principles of religion and morals. With this achieved she was one with La Fayette in leading them to freedom. She chose, with his approval, for superintendent of the plantation, Monsieur de Richeprey. He proved well worthy of the charge and devoted himself assiduously to it.

She was in touch with one of the priests of the seminary of Saint Esprit, that had a house at Cayenne.

Oh, would that we possessed her correspondence with the missionaries! [Virginia cries out to her children]. Then you would see what she had begun, what she counted upon doing. You would see how her philosophic ideas were animated by a supernatural understanding; how charity burned with a hope to teach these Negroes to know and to love God. She would show the philosophic friends of the blacks that the success of their enterprise would be largely due to religion.

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The Revolution, unhappily, put an end to the Cayenne experiment. "But we had at least the consolation," concludes Virginia, "in knowing that the Negroes of La Belle Gabrielle did not commit the horrors that had place on other plantations."

It was this clarified zeal for religion that quickened her wish to see no injustice committed in its name and brought her to La Fayette's support in securing the Civil State of Protestants. She encouraged him in a journey of much inconvenience from Chavaniac to Nîmes to inform himself at first hand of their situation, and the grievances he worked to lessen. She was in his confidence in the veiled visits he made to the chief resident places of Protestants. She knew, as he wrote Washington, his chances of failure "because nobody will give me a scrap of writing nor support any plan whatever."

The condition of Protestants in France harked back to Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

At this time, however, there were no overt persecutions, as La Fayette wrote Washington, but "their liberty depended upon the caprice of the King, Queen, parliament or ministers." Continuation of the rigor of the old laws, which were almost identical with what obtained against Catholics in England before and after Cromwell and up to very recent date, was demanded by the General Assembly of the Clergy. So strenuous was the demand, rather command, that the old laws be retained that Louis XVI did not dare omit from his coronation oath a promise to suppress heretics on French soil.

La Fayette, in advocating before the Notables the legalization of Protestant marriage, the validity of their testaments in the eyes of the law, the legitimization of their children, was guided largely by the American Constitution. That document, as some one hundred per cent



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so-called Americans are prone to disregard, "decided in favor of complete religious toleration." "That seems natural enough now," commented Theodore Roosevelt in his *Life of Gouverneur Morris* (1897), but at that time there was hardly a European state that practised it. Great Britain harassed her Catholic subjects in a hundred different ways, while in France Protestants could hardly be regarded as having any legal standing whatever. "On no other point do the statesmen of the Revolution," concludes Roosevelt, "show to more marked advantage than in this complete religious toleration."

Despite "nobody would give La Fayette a scrap of paper," it was the Bishop of Langres, Monsieur de la Luzerne, who seconded his proposition before the Notables (May 23, 1787), and the Civil State of Protestants was successfully carried.

The rue de Bourbon salon, in consequence of this Christian measure, became the rendezvous of the Protestant clergy of France. At one notable dinner, Adrienne presided with two hundred Protestant ministers. To each and every one she accorded the same gracious hospitality as to the clergy of her own faith. For, as Virginia emphasizes and Adrienne's life demonstrated,

the more she was the daughter of the Church, the more she detested the persecutions which separated her and which otherwise were opposed to the spirit of the Gospels. My mother's tolerance was founded on the first principles of religion. She regarded it a great crime to spoil the liberty that God had wished to leave to men and to provide by motives of interest a resolution that conscience alone can dictate. . . . She wished to win over to Catholicism, through an elevated reasoning,

the reasoning that convinced her of the Real Presence.



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Never have I seen [declares Virginia] a more live desire to make converts. Her zeal furnished the means, be it to ally herself with persons she believed ready to be enlightened; be it to scatter obstacles that their particular situation put in the way of their arriving at the truth. . . . She often had occasion to exercise this zeal, which was always accompanied by a delicacy which prevented it from ever becoming intrusive or importunate.

The "Civil Constitution of the Clergy," which La Fayette recognized if he was not instrumental in framing it, was a great tribulation to Adrienne. It was imposed by the National Assembly of 1790. That body was for the most part composed of "men of moderate views and extraordinarily benevolent intentions." It was a hard-working body and accomplished not a little good before the wine of success went to its head and it lost balance.

Not content with substituting eighty-three departments for the old royal provinces, reorganizing the law courts—happy changes that survive to this day—the Assembly, to secure money, drifted to the drastic measure of confiscating, in name of "nationalizing," the enormous landed property of the Church, to serve as security for vast issues of paper money (*assignats*).

Emboldened by this Robin Hood gesture, it then undertook to reorganize the entire Catholic Church in France, irrespective of the Pope or any other clerical authority. Parish priests were to be elected by the voters of their districts; the bishops by the voters of their departments.

Scarcely one-third of the clergy of France took the oath of obedience to this "obnoxious Civil Constitution of the Clergy." Great numbers of people, including not a few agnostics and free-thinkers, heretofore ardent supporters of the Revolution, became lukewarm or withdrew their allegiance.

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As emancipated Protestant ministers flocked in 1787 to the hôtel in the rue de Bourbon to partake of the Marquis' hospitality, persecuted priests and evicted nuns now sought Adrienne's counsel and protection. Courageously she housed and fed ecclesiastics, demanded protection for persecuted priests, and encouraged non-juring clergy to exercise their function and reclaim their liberty.

Precisely because of the prominence of her personal situation [Virginia tells us], she felt she ought to emphasize openly her attachment to the Catholic cause. To that end she assiduously visited churches and oratories where persecuted clergy found refuge. She was prominent among the aristocracy at Saint Sulpice, her parish church, when its curé from the pulpit refused to take the civil oath. It was a bold act but it was living up to her principle, and never as the Revolution advanced did she fail to evince her loyalty, often not only at the risk of jeopardizing my father's popularity, but her own life.

Adrienne in the *Life of the Duchesse d'Ayen* writes:

In the midst of the troubles that the Civil Constitution of the Clergy made, I believed at times there was a means of serving religion. The sincerity with which M. de La Fayette served liberty offered me resources. Despite my mother's excessive repugnance to mix in affairs, she had such a desire of good that it determined her to talk with some pious persons who could promote and through us extend it.

Their most exciting service was facilitating Monseigneur de Bonal's correspondence with the Vatican. The Monseigneur was the Bishop of Claremont, "a man of great mind, grand manner and much usage of the world." In the Assembly he set the example of refusal to take the un-Christian oath. Before addressing that body, largely agnostic, he had labored assiduously to

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avert the fatal rupture between that unreasoning power and the Holy See.

He entrusted to the Duchesse d'Ayen the forwarding of his letters to the Pope. The Duchesse passed them to Madame de La Fayette who saw that they were speeded safely to Rome. In the same manner, the Vatican replies reached the Bishop of Claremont.

"My father was far from interfering with her succor of the non-juring clergy and the persecuted *religieuse*," Virginia writes, "but you may imagine how painful it was for my mother to think that by her conduct she might do him a real wrong and lessen his popularity, which it was so important to preserve."

But no consideration made her hesitate when it was a duty; and she had some consolation in the accomplishment of these religious acts, since it afforded La Fayette, who at this time was both Vice-President of the Assembly and Commander of the National Guard, frequent occasion to show his respect for the freedom of the clergy and his firmness in maintaining it.

Madame de La Fayette would have liked to serve the cause of religion more efficaciously by leading considerable number of the clergy to more conciliatory views. There were bishops, for instance, whose piety she venerated, whose uprightness of character and sincere intentions she respected, but their political opinions distressed her greatly.

"The confidence and trust they put in some of the intriguers destroyed for her the effect of their most pacific dispositions." La Fayette frequently dined the Constitutional clergy. Madame de La Fayette presided at these functions, but not without voicing before them her attachment to the cause of the ancient bishops. She discussed her opinions with those whose personal character



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she esteemed. So much intelligence and sincerity went into her reasoning, enlivened by the "juicy wit" inherited from the Duc d'Ayen and the light touch of the accomplished salon leader, that they could not be offended.

"Always, as my father desired," writes Virginia, "she received each of his guests irrespective of their conduct or opinions, but never did she do so with injury to her own consideration. She conserved in all things the liberty of expressing her own thoughts in her own fashion."

Only once did Adrienne break from this prescribed rule to welcome all persons on equal footing. It was when the newly installed Archbishop of Paris came to dine with La Fayette. He did not come in the rôle of pastor as had his confrères, and she did not wish to receive him as a non-juring cleric, so she dined away from home—unusual for a titled woman. It was a drastic move and created no end of talk in Paris, as did many of her detours from revolutionary edict that conflicted with her conscience.



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CURTAIN RAISER

NO carriage-and-four was oftener at the porte-cochère of the house in the rue de Bourbon, the first years of the Revolution, than the smart turnout of the eighteenth century's most ubiquitous American, Gouverneur Morris.

On reaching Paris early in 1789, his first call, after paying his respects to the American Minister, Thomas Jefferson, was upon the Marquis de La Fayette. He was welcomed, as were all Americans abroad that day, into the ultra-democratic household with warm, open-handed hospitality, and in this instance camaraderie; for Morris and the Marquis had met frequently in America.

Contrary to expectations this rainy Sunday (May 3), the Morris carriage passed under the porte-cochère without stopping. The all-seeing blue eyes of the shrewd man of affairs had glimpsed, as he entered the drive, the tail of the La Fayette coach with its four blooded horses, driver and footman in glistening livery, turning into rue de Bourbon.

Madame de La Fayette was on the move to Versailles. The Duchesse d'Ayen and Rosalie (now the Marquise de Grammont) had preceded her to the Duc's Versailles hôtel. The Marquis de La Fayette was already there as a representative for the Notables. It hurt his conscience not to be with the *Tiers État*—the Commonalty.

He wanted to stand for election to it. But he had been after a vigorous campaign elected in Auvergne, by

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a small majority of votes, to represent the province as became his rank. He chafed under the restrictions it imposed, and was as dangerously Republican as his constituents, the Notables, feared.

The Court and Clergy were already assembled at Versailles to await the audience to be given the following day (Monday) to the deputies, "the elected delegates of the Commonalty."

The rain continued as the La Fayette coach rolled over the mud of Paris streets and through the octroi gate into the King's highway, the twelve miles of excellent road to Versailles. Adrienne's spirits were of the mood of the festive populace, swarming on every side, impervious to weather and bent on holiday.

The highway, much traveled at all times, was deafeningly noisy and strikingly colorful with vehicles and humans of low and high degree, everyone making, two days in advance, for the most dynamic May Day party of all history.

Heavy wagons and empty fiacres were debarred, without detracting from the number or unsightliness of the *carabas* and *concons*, which always had right of way. They were the Rolls-Royce of the unprivileged, the very poor's only transport to royalty's playground where, like cats, they might look at the King. The "fares" were Paris laborers, menials, small shopkeepers, farmers, peasants, serfs—the back-water of centuries of inherited oppressions and injustices. Commonly inarticulate, this day they vociferated hilariously.

Was it not to right their wrongs the States-General was called? Boastfully they put the query to each other and shouted it to passing wayfarers.

The Assembly of the Notables (*Not-ables* a wag named it) summoned by the King (1787), its personnel

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chosen by His Majesty, had been dispersed, as they knew, to make way for the States-General. The Notables' only notable achievement was provision for the election of provincial representatives of the Third Estate. Their election to the number of six hundred—originally it was limited to three hundred—took place the following year (1788).

The States-General, as all France knew by this time, was representative of three classes: Nobility, Clergy and commoners known as the Third Estate. Politically, the two former were divided among themselves; the latter paid all the taxes, which in turn were wrung from the peasants, the nation's bone and sinew.

The Third Estate was of the bourgeoisie: Merchants, manufacturers, professionals such as lawyers, teachers, bankers, and like bread-earners and money-makers. The peasants were not represented. But there were comparatively few, however ignorant or illiterate, that did not know the *raison d'être* of the States-General's resurrection, so thoroughly had the provinces and the countryside been canvassed and harangued preparatory to the elections. Everyone counted upon it to free him from taxation and reduce the national debt, appallingly augmented by the extravagances of a luxuriant and licentious Court. They also knew that double the original number had been elected largely because the Notables were powerless to impose permanent taxes. The Notables and Clergy—three hundred each—united could veto any measure proposed by the Third Estate.

Were they united?

Suspicious that the reactionary-aristocratic party centered about the Queen would block the Third Estate at the first opportunity, the latter were prepared for counter-measure. What turn the measure would take was at this



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crisis beyond human ken. But like their betters, good at guessing, were the *carabas* and *concon* fares, literally churned, if not half-jolted to death, at twelve sous or sixpence a head over the good twelve miles between Paris and Versailles.

The *carabas* were long wicker cages swung on main braces. They had from four to six wheels and were driven by six horses. Each carried from twenty to two dozen passengers, and transit was far from rapid. Occasionally ten miles were covered in less than six and a half hours. The *concons* were less democratic and speedier. Ordinarily they seated five passengers, but this rainy Sunday and throughout the States-General each carried twice that number. The *concon* rested on two huge wheels, opened at the front and had a hard bench for seat. The first-comers, in the vernacular of the road, were called *monkeys*. Tardy passengers sat beside the driver on a wooden plank in front of the dashboard. They were dubbed *rabbits*. When monkeys and rabbits emerged at journey's end from their prison-like enclosure they were, in accordance with the weather, a dusty, perspiring, dripping or mud-covered lot.

Offensive as were these vehicles to the eye and inadequate of service, they were allowed on the King's highway at all hours, jest of the rabble and butt of noblemen and their lackeys to whom they gave right of way.

The La Fayette coach with the Marquis' coat of arms, *Cur Non*, was known to every "Knight of the Road." It never failed of respectful attention, but it was not until two months later, when the municipality of Paris made him Commander of the Paris National Guard, that the coach had military salute and right of way by popular assent.

The convocation of the States-General, aside from its



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profound import, was for most of the Third Estate a tremendous lark! Many of the elected delegates had never before been to Paris, seen the Palace or Court, the King or the Queen. And not a few, aside from Robespierre, Mirabeau, Bailey, Barnave, Dr. Guillotine, etc., were destined for no little infamous fame. All were as guileless as nobles and clergy of the speed with which the nation was verging towards anarchy, guileless as the monkeys or rabbits, bent this Sunday of drenching rain only on getting to Versailles and finding a place from which to see next day's grand procession of royalty and commoner.

Through lowering clouds and above the woods shutting off the Palace from Paris, one glimpsed, atop the main façade of the church Saint Louis, the white marble statue of Saint François de Sales. The *cabaras* and *concon* fares sighted it long before they alighted to jostle afoot through the swarming streets to the town center, the huge Place d'Armes.

The La Fayette coach pulled up within the iron gate adorned with trophies, the Court precincts where the nobles had apartments. Adrienne's kin were largely established in suites of the châteaux. La Fayette, the Vicomte de Noailles and his Louise were there for the session. Not a few occupied apartments in the town or châteaux in the woody environs, or along the King's highway, sprinkled with "Gentlemen's Houses." Indeed, we are told, no sooner were the elections terminated than everyone who was anyone arranged to establish a house at Versailles. All members of the States-General searched there for apartments.

Comtesse de Tessé's salon, as in Paris, was "resort of Republicans of the first feather." It welcomed everything but dullness. The Ségurs—the Comte was returned

## THE CURTAIN RAISER

from five years at the Russian Court—were foremost of the entertainers. Was not his lovely wife, the Comtesse de Ségur, Adrienne's aunt?

Madame de Staël lived at Versailles the year round with her father, Necker, the Geneva banker, France's Minister of Finance and for the nonce the people's idol. Near the Orangerie lodged Madame de Simiane, acclaimed the most beautiful woman in Parisian society and Court gossip whispered Adrienne's most formidable rival in the Marquis' affections. Gossip, however, did not debar the beauty from the La Fayette household, for Adrienne had a way of receiving women discreetly or indiscreetly in his train.

Have you ever been to Versailles? Physically it differs little from Bourbon times. Place d'Armes, the huge open space in front of the Palace, holds the center, the hub of the wheel. Virtually it is the outer court of the equally huge Court of the Kings. It halves the town and from it radiate to the north and the south the main streets and avenues. The church of the northern half is Notre-Dame; that of the southern, Saint Louis, now a cathedral. Each church is the center of its quarter. The way from Notre-Dame to Saint Louis in a straight line is scarcely half a mile. The great Place d'Armes absorbs the middle third.

The monkey and rabbit fares, knowing that the procession would assemble at Notre-Dame and proceed from there to Saint Louis, made for the steps and recesses of either church for sleeping quarters. Bed and lodging in the town were quite beyond their purses. Many were forced to camp in the wet woods pending Monday's dawn. Happily after six o'clock the clouds broke and the sun rose warmly to dry wet clothes and iron out bodily crinks.

Those lucky to be within radius of Notre-Dame saw

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the deputies begin to gather there as early as seven o'clock; but it was ten before the "low swinging, plumed and gilded royal carriages, in number close to two hundred," reached the church. The King and his household, the Queen and her retinue, the Princes of the Blood, all but the despicable Duc d'Orléans, occupied the carriages. Disdainful of rank, Orléans for a purpose lurked inside the church with the deputies.

With the clergy of Versailles, a small surpliced body, in the lead, the procession set out for Saint Louis. The commoners followed the local clergy in the black costume of the *Tiers État* of the States-General of one hundred and seventy-five years before. Pictorially the clock had not moved. The same etiquette obtained. The nobility of Paris, much feathered and embroidered, priests, households, music and the Bishop trailed after the black-robed commoners. The Archbishop of Paris carrying in his hands the Blessed Sacrament, Monsieur and his brother, and two other Princes of the Blood, holding up the corners of the crimson velvet canopy, preceded the Queen and her ladies, closing the procession of two thousand or more, "the length of a brigade." Everyone, save the Archbishop who held the exquisitely jeweled monstrance, carried a lighted blessed candle.

Slowly, impressively the procession passes up rue Dauphin, across the huge Place d'Armes, then down rue Sabony; towers, steeples, balconies and windows of the town gay with multi-colored flags, historic banners, priceless tapestries; every nook and cranny along the route packed with spectators. The sun, hid for days, now shines benignly; loud cheers for the commoners as they pass—six hundred swordless soldiers, their solid black broken by the blue shirt of an old Breton farmer.

Significantly the dense crowd neither uncovers nor



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bends the knee as the Blessed Sacrament passes. "Catholicism in the generation preceding the French Revolution is come to this low estate," says Hilaire Belloc. There is silence for the lords' blaze of color; affectionate acclamation for the King. "*Vive le Roi! Vive le Roi! Vive le Roi!*" For the Queen is long ominous silence. She is exceedingly hurt and she looks it. Two years before, she dared not go to Paris, fearful of insult if not bodily harm. Despite that half mile of torture to her proud spirit, she is said to have lifted an affectionate glance to the projecting colonnade of the great stables. There on a trundle-bed lay the pitiably broken body of her son, the Dauphin. Through sickly veiled eyes he listlessly watches his mother and the passing procession.

The King is doubly vexed and the Queen sees it as does everybody along the route. Aside from resentment of this public mark of dissatisfaction with his consort, he glimpsed the Duc d'Orléans, walking as a representative. His place is with the Princes of the Blood. "Why is he not with them?" queries His Majesty. The monkeys and the rabbits could have told him.

It was a great show—well worth the price, they agreed. Viewed through two rows of tapestries from a window shared with Talleyrand's mistress, the fascinating Madame Flahaut, Gouverneur Morris wrote to Philadelphia: "It was a magnificent spectacle." Versailles' resident population of fifty thousand swollen this day to twice the number, little suspected it was viewing the last religious gathering of the old monarchy. How could it? Even Adrienne's Republican-fed mind had no place for such a devastating thought. But subconsciously disquietude bore in upon the Duchesse and her dyed-in-the-wool Royalist daughters as they watched their father, the Duc d'Ayen, their husbands and in-laws. The Duc,

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the Vicomte de Noailles, the Marquis de La Fayette, the Marquis de Montagu and the Marquis de Grammont walked with the nobles. La Fayette was far from happy in his cloth of gold coat, embroidered mantle, lace jabot, wrist frills, jeweled sword and large hat with white plume splendid as the King's.

When the procession reached the square facing Saint Louis, the Noailles women devoutly followed the Swiss guard up the church's dim incensed aisle to the family tribune.

The Bishop of Nancy, who unlike many of the higher clergy, lived in his province, preached the sermon. At his mention of liberty, equality, fraternity there was loud applause and continuous hand-clapping. Never before, it was said that day, was "such a demonstration of feeling known to a church on a religious occasion."

It visibly disturbed the Noailles tribune. The occupants prayed with renewed fervor, prayed apprehensively. The applause to Adrienne was desecrating. She recoiled from it as Abby Adams had seen her recoil five years earlier at the Te Deum for the birth of the Dauphin at Notre-Dame Cathedral. The Adamses and Jefferson had gone with Adrienne in the La Fayette coach to share with her the Noailles tribune while the Duc d'Ayen and La Fayette sat with the King inside the sanctuary.

"The ceremony was too magnificent," she told Abby. "Too much noise and bustle for a church. It was not devout enough or peaceful." How far less peaceful Saint Louis this ominous day!

## CHAPTER XX

### THE MAY PARTY

THE midday angelus rings the next day (May 5, 1789) before the States-General is formally assembled in the Palais des Menus Plaisirs, impatient to hear the King's address.

The great hall, erected two years before to accommodate the Notables, stands at present as on this May day of monarchical splendor. Follow the broad walk, as did the black-robed deputies, from Place d'Armes up the spacious avenue to the great châteaux, and one confronts it at the left.

As early as eight o'clock the ticketed ones—Morris had his *carte* through the Duchesse d'Orléans—were admitted to the galleries, to sit in cramped position while the different orders were being seated and the stage set for royalty's *entrée*.

To the favored alien "gallery god" it is a memorable picture of "all that is noble and royal in titled France." Great numbers of notable women in fine dress, a vital frame to encompass the throne, which rises from the extreme end of the hall. A specially designed stage supports it, approached by steps like an altar. A purple velvet canopy shot with gold and white lilies tops it. Below the throne to the left of the King is the seat of the Queen. Back of His Majesty are grouped Princes of the Blood; right and left of the throne, bevvies of Princesses with gentlemen and ladies of their retinue, a gorgeous flower-bed of color, sparkle and perfume.



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Front stage, to left of throne, stands the Keeper of the Seals. Officers of the household—the Versailles Court numbered ten thousand—strut about, while guards of giant build flank the throne. Below the stage, in a long line to the right, sit the Ministers of State, each with a large *cahier* before him. Necker is the only one in the garb of the commoner. On opposite sides of the hall, sit on benches—quasi modern proletarians would have had gilded chairs—the Field Marshals of France and other great officers, all in splendor of Court dress and decorations of martial valor. Facing the ministers are the representatives of the clergy: cardinals, bishops, priests, abbots, to the number of three hundred, in the rubric colors, scarlet, crimson, purple, relieved by black, grey or white of the lower clerics.

A bishop, long resident of his diocese and a notable preacher, is applauded as he takes his seat. Applause for yesterday's sermonist, the Bishop of Nancy, with murmurs in some quarters that he does not deserve it. In front of the Field Marshals, facing the clergy, are an equal number of representatives of the nobility wearing black robes with waistcoats of cloth of gold. Over each shoulder, falling to the waist, is a lapel, quarter of a yard wide at the top, broadening to the bottom, the whole fashioned of cloth of gold.

Benches stretch across the hall, facing the stage. There, in the same somber costume they wore to Saint Louis church, sit the Representatives of the People. The old man from Breton, in blue shirt of yesterday, joins them and is applauded heartily, as was Rousseau in skull cap and bedroom slippers at the Court Theatre of Versailles; Benjamin Franklin's coon-skin and fustian in Paris salons.

Unobserved, Dr. Guillotine, inventor of the instru-

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ment to "mitigate the horror of capital punishment," sits with the Third Estate.

At intervals, between clergy and nobles, directly in front of the Representatives of the People and facing the throne, stand heralds in costumes of surpassing richness in texture and color. Their gloved hands hold formidable staves.

P'sh! Silence! The King! The brilliant assembly rises *en masse*. Shouts of applause. "*Vive le Roi! Vive le Roi!*"

Majestically follows Marie Antoinette, "every inch a Queen." She is in royal purple velvet; "a circle of tiny diamonds and a heron feather in her auburn hair" which one night's terror will speedily whiten. Like Aurora before dawn, she approaches and takes her seat below the King. Silence profound, silence ominous as that of yesterday's pageant, falls like a pall over the assembly.

Madame de La Fayette from her seat with the old noblesse meets the proud eyes of the hurt woman. How much water—bitter, muddy—has passed under the bridge since the Dauphin's first birthday fête—that day of days for both women! How gracious, how popular then was the lovely Marie Antoinette! How warm, that day, her praise of the Conqueror of Cornwallis! How interested her queries!

"Dare Frenchmen be so cruel, and to a woman, their Queen," breathes Adrienne through the continuous hushed silence. Emotion surges. She swallows unshed tears. She has learned her lesson in self-suppression. Her mother and sisters openly dabble their eyes, but theirs is emotion not wholly of the Queen's making.

The King sits on the throne of the Bourbons. Can that "fat, medium-sized, high-shouldered, worst formed man you ever saw" of ordinary occasion be the Majesty

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that now looks down and over this brilliant assembly of divided subjects? In lieu of a crown, Louis XVI puts on a round beaver hat ornamented with white plumes. The front is turned up and fastened in the center with a large diamond button. At close of his speech, "brief, to the point and well read, in the tone, manner and pride to be expected from Bourbon blood," he takes off his hat. The nobles do likewise. Their hats, minus diamond button, are identical with the King's. There is much on and off of hats, evidencing, to one observer, want of adequate rehearsal, but the "effect of the mass of waving white plumes is indescribably fine."

The King reiterates his love for his people. Tremendous, continuous, "*Vive le Roi! Vive le Roi!*" "The Queen weeps, or pretends to, but there is not a voice to wish her well."

Necker, Minister of Finance, the Swiss banker of mediocre parts, glibly conceals, with three hours of badly essayed oratory, the appalling amount of the nation's debt. He is wildly applauded. The King looks pleased. Necker's mediocrity and his lies are yet to be discovered. The address *bien écrite* is badly delivered. Necker knows it and asks to be excused. A clerk finishes it. Royalty, clergy, commoners yawn. One snores outright. The brilliant assembly is akin in chuckles.

The King rises to depart. Loud, long, affectionate "*Vive le Roi!*" Here and there, *sotto voce*, "*Vive la Reine!*" Faintly it rises to a single *haute voix*. Marie Antoinette makes an humble courtesy; "a sinking of the high Austrian spirit." Louder rises "*Vive la Reine!*" Again she courtesies, lower than before, and the impressive cortège moves into the open and on to the Palace.

"So drops the curtain on the first great act of this first great drama in which a Bourbon gives freedom!" But



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the courtiers as they file into the May sunshine now at its meridian, to face the bloom of Le Nôtre's gardens, and the music of the multi-colored fountains, do they feel, as does Morris, what the King is seemingly insensible of —“the pang of greatness wearing off”?

## CHAPTER XXI

### MIDST OF ALARMS

**R**ECOVERED from blessing of Church and felicitation of King, the States-General confronted at once a dynamic question: to meet in *three* houses, as it had at its last assembly (1614), or all in *one* house?

The latter would give the Third Estate, now numerically double, a speedy majority. The Court, with intrigue if not treason up its sleeve, urged the King to favor the three houses, which he did. The irate Third Estate retired to the Tennis Court near the Palace, the same court modern tourists invade. There it took the famous oath: "Never to disperse until it had given France a Constitution."

Three days later, the perplexed King instructed the Third Estate to proceed, irrespective of the privileged orders.

"We are here by *the will of the people* and we shall only quit our seats at the point of the bayonet," was Mirabeau's ultimatum to the King's messenger. Uncertain of the army's loyalty, the Court faction, motivated by the Queen, Comte d'Artois and Duchesse de Polignac, feared to enrage the nation by resorting to violence. So the nobles and clergy (not a few of both orders were divided in their allegiance to monarchical government) were permitted by the harassed King to join the Third Estate. The united body reassembled in the Palais des Menus Plaisirs. At once it discarded the title, States-General, and took the name of National Assembly. Re-

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born, renamed, it set to the tremendous task of drawing up a liberal constitution for France.

Philosophers, idealists, "pipe-dreamers" impregnated for the most part by the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau, the Assembly was prompt to frame soaring Declarations of the Rights of Man; but it soon found it infinitely easier to tear down moth-eaten institutions than to replace them with a working formula to meet the masses' cry for bread and the clamor of an awakened nation for liberty, equality, fraternity.

Everywhere throughout the kingdom discontent surged. Everywhere were uprisings, riots; peasants against landlords; the bourgeoisie and the King's tax-gatherers; burning of châteaux, murders and pillage. Unmindful, if not ignorant, of the internal disorder, the National Assembly toiled and muddled on. It was far from anarchistic or socialistic; it desired, no more than did the nation, the overthrow of the monarchy, the abdication of the King. But how could it in honor leave to others the putting of new wine into new bottles?

And so it continues to orate, Versailles to visit, the Court to make merry, while Jefferson observes America's first Fourth of July in Paris. A large party of Americans foregather in his beautiful house and garden, corner of Champs-Élysées and Neuve de Barry, for the four o'clock dinner served as for a viceroy rather than supposedly the prince of American commoners. The Marquis and the Marquise de La Fayette are the outstanding guests; always the American Colony thinks of them as compatriots. A goodly sprinkling of French officers of army and navy who fought for America's independence add piquancy and loquacity. The memories they recall are many hued and absorbingly thrilling, but not sufficiently



so to divert Morris from his "Meddlesome Matty" solicitude for the welfare of France.

That night he confided to his *Diary* in chronicling the event: "I urge La Fayette—Madame attentive—to give strict attention to preserve, if possible, some constitutional liberty for the people. The current is setting so strongly against the noblesse that I apprehend their destruction, in which will be involved most pernicious consequences."

Much entertaining of the Assembly at Versailles. The La Fayettees keep open house. The Marquise de La Tour du Pin, hostess for her father-in-law, the Minister of War, gives two dinners a week of twenty-four covers each, until the entire Assembly has been invited. The men wear full dress; their wives are not invited. To one of the La Tour du Pin dinners comes Robespierre in "an apple green satin costume, his mass of white hair well dressed." The bestial, brainy Mirabeau—the only member hissed on his entrance at the convocation of the States-General—is not invited to the du Pins'.

Ten days after the Jefferson dinner is the fall of the Bastille (July 14, 1789). Versailles, busy dining the deputies, had said the day before, "All is well in Paris." The Bastille was the royal prison-fortress on the outskirts of Paris. A *lettre de cachet* (royal order for imprisonment without trial) had confined there many of France's most famous men, including Voltaire, for daring to challenge a noble, and Mirabeau for disobeying his irascible father. Had La Fayette's American adventure failed, the *lettre de cachet* Louis XVI issued at the instigation of the Duc d'Ayen would have probably buried him there.

Louis XVI unlike his predecessors, had made little use of the Bastille. To the amazement of Europe, its fall

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disclosed scarcely a dozen prisoners, all old men, two imbeciles. But to the popular mind, it was the symbol of centuries of Bourbon absolutism. Its annihilation miraculously effected through much misunderstanding between defenders and assailants—the latter an infuriated, lawless Paris mob abetted by disloyal soldiers—heralded the rise of a new nation.

The same night, Comte d'Artois and the Duchesse de Polignac fêted two German regiments at Versailles, brought there through their machinations. They planned to reduce Paris by famine and take two hundred of the National Assembly prisoners.

The King was not informed of the plot until two o'clock in the morning (July 13). He dismissed the foreign troops and addressed the Assembly in person. It was to their satisfaction, and Versailles conducted him in triumph to the Château.

Too late! The Revolution was on and there was no stopping it. La Fayette sent the key of the Bastille to General Washington, and it hangs to-day in the memorial Mount Vernon home.

The Hôtel in the rue de Bourbon leaped overnight into the foreground. From mental clearing house of the Patriotic Party it was now its stronghold of defense.

The stimulating conversation that had previously distinguished Madame de La Fayette's democratic salon gradually gave way, as did the aristocratic salons of Paris and Versailles, to intemperate discussions, heated vituperations. Where formerly vivacious women of liberal minds, resourceful brains aflame with zeal for the public good, made for sane thinking and temperate action, unbalanced passion swayed. Famous beauties reddened and gesticulated vociferously as fishwives to hold their own with or against the Assembly's drift. Comtesse de

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Tessé and Madame de Staël returned home from a Versailles session, where they contributed to the gestation of the unborn Constitution, and fell out over Mirabeau. "So animated was the Comtess' reproof of the Madam's approbation of the rascal," notes Gouverneur Morris, in his diary, "that it almost got beyond the bounds of politeness."

Above the envy, jealousy, recriminations, the intolerance and intrigue seething on every side, Adrienne's spirit soared, for "not one prejudice had empire over her"; gift unusual as was her sense of justice, the inheritance of a long line of jurist forebears, and never had she greater need of its safeguard.

Shortly after the fall of the Bastille, the King legalized the National Guard and recognized La Fayette as its Commander. With this increase of power, Adrienne's anxieties quickened; her cares multiplied.

It was good to see her Knight mounted on the famous white horse, symbolical of his Galahad-like quest of a human liberty, a human freedom that "never was on land or sea"; good to see him idol of the army and the militia of France; hear him acclaimed the hope of the down-trodden.

"She approved, admired his conduct, and in the most upsetting developments that ensued was sustained by the thought that he was working for the triumph of just principles." That justified everything to her mind. It covered a multitude of shortcomings on his part, of which she was not supposed to be conscious. She rarely saw him during the months of the "great fear" (July and August, 1789). He was seldom at home; and when there, as Morris' *Diary* notes with increasing petulance, "he was always surrounded."

"The first evils of the Revolution," writes Virginia,



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"filled my mother's soul with bitterness." The market-women's march upon Versailles (many were men dressed as women, all the tools of unprincipled agitators); their violent invasion of the Assembly and the Palace; their brutal compulsion of the King and Queen to accompany them back to Paris with the decapitated heads of two of the loyal Life Bodyguard carried on spikes beside the royal carriage; the King's flight to Varennes, and like catastrophes made her insensible to much of the proud enjoyment she had previously had in the Commander of the National Guard of Paris, "the most popular man in France." It was to her "no satisfaction but intense bitterness to see him so often sacrifice his popularity in order to oppose an irregular movement or an arbitrary act."

The National Assembly followed to Paris the King and the Queen and the Dauphin. "The baker and the baker's wife and the baker's little boy; now we shall have bread," was the populace's cry. Eighteen of the Assembly delegates packed the La Fayette carriages, wrested from the Court stables.

Later, in the great oval *manège* or riding-school north of the Tuileries Palace gardens, the Assembly continued to toil.

It was there that the drama of the Revolution was staged.

The major axis of the *manège*'s ellipsis, corresponded to the pavement to the north of rue de Rivoli under the arcades. The center of this axis was where rue Castiglione now falls into rue de Rivoli. Its southern wall slightly overlapped the present railing of the Tuileries gardens. Its northern wall was about in line with the northern limit of the property occupied by the Continental Hotel.

It was good form for the beau monde to attend the Assembly sessions. They replaced, for the moment, the Comédie Française, Opéra Comique and like entertainment. Madame d'Hénin, Princesse de Poix, Duchesse de Biron and the Princesse de Bouillon, the social arbiters, decreed it chic to follow the philosophical debates. "The combined society of these princesses," wrote the Marquise de La Tour du Pin, "was the only religion they possessed." So thither flocked fine feathers, inflated panniers and skyscraper coiffures à la Leonard, to make gay the Assembly if not inspire the orators. And the hungry nation grew hungrier; the national debt soared and soared till it tipped seven hundred million livres!

"The Queen only showed discontent with the proceedings without ever deciding to act. But she never failed to show, every time she dared, her unbounded hatred of La Fayette." To Madame Campan, governess, she spoke out: "How could I have rejoiced in Lord Cornwallis' defeat? Had my portrait painted for *his* General Washington? *Ingrat!* He would upset the Throne; banish the King."

"This is the work of that General de La Fayette," cried the unhappy Queen, when officers arrested her at Varennes. "His head is so full of his American Republic! He will see what a French Republic amounts to!" Prophetic daughter of the Cæsars! . . .

The Varennes bungle is straightened out; the Queen resumes her receptions at the Tuileries. Madame de La Fayette is the first to call upon her sovereign. She is the only woman of the Patriotic Party present. It creates much talk in Paris and is carried into the provinces. A bold if not a dangerous act; but not bolder than her presence among the aristocrats that thronged Saint Sulpice when its rector refused from the pulpit to take the non-

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juring oath. Her conscience dictated both moves. It was not for her to do otherwise. La Fayette with all his insatiable *besoin de briller* in the popular eye approved of Adrienne's consistency. He followed his own conscience, why should she disregard hers?

Her presence at the Queen's reception was no less the dictate of conscience than her discard of the prefix *de* in wake of the Vicomte de Noailles' proposal to the National Assembly (August 4, 1789) that all titles and feudal rights be abolished—a proposal carried "in a frenzy of self-sacrifice." Not until long after the Revolution does Madame de La Fayette resume the *de*, and then rarely save for legal protection in property rights. . . .

With the Revolution's advance, constitutions and parties rose and vanished as incidents on a movie screen. The house in the rue de Bourbon bristled with constitution-making and cabinet selection.

Madame de La Fayette's activity in the drafting of the first Constitution which the King, after a night's deliberation, accepted (1791) and solemnly swore to uphold, the Morris *Diary* unwittingly reveals; but always (tantalizingly) more is between the lines than on the surface for he is never quite sure of himself when he mentions her name. Or, perhaps, as is most likely, the *Diary* editors judiciously deleted choice morsels. How, one wonders, did this revelatory bit, which makes Adrienne truly one of us, escape the blue pencil? It follows a dinner he gave for her at which the "lady in the case" was present.

April 2, 1791, "Madame de La Fayette tells me that I am in love with Madame de Beaumont. I own it though it is not true. She says her company must be insipid after such agreeable people. *Que veut dire cela?*"



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Regardless of deletions, one feels throughout the admirable restraint with which she invariably listened to the American impetuously airing at Versailles and elsewhere his theories and plans for the regeneration of France. How seemingly meek her endurance of his tireless insistence that La Fayette incorporate them into the half-baked Constitution! In this as in kindred instances, hers was far from the meekness synonymous with weakness. Rather it was the meekness of the Beatitude, anger under control. With what consummate charity and delicate tact she veiled her knowledge of his "continuous communication with the royal family and the Court in which he represented La Fayette as an ultra-democrat too Republican even for the United States!" A misrepresentation which La Fayette wrote on his deathbed to J. Fenimore Cooper, "may be counted among the numerous causes that encouraged the royal family not to listen to my counsels and not to take into any account public opinion."

Morris sincerely believed—one deduces from the *Diary*—that he knew the French nation and its needs better than the wisest of its statesmen. He was convinced that his were the brains—not the La Fayette's—to lead harrowed France into the Promised Land. And not without reason. Was he not one of the framers of the Constitution of the State of New York (1777)? In drafting that Constitution in the House at Kingston, New York, he left a record of his hatred of the clergy, which Roosevelt says was as great as Jay's, "who never got over the Catholic persecution of his Huguenot forebears."

Reverend Jared Sparks, first editor of the *Morris Diary*, writes at length of

the somewhat singular paragraph that Jay brought forth to close an article designed for securing toleration and granting to all

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mankind the free exercise of religious profession and worship. He would give toleration to all except those professing the religion of the Church of Rome. Such people ought not to hold land in or be admitted to participate in the civil rights enjoyed by the members of this State until such of the said profession appear in the Supreme Court of the State and there solemnly swear that they verily believe in their conscience, that no pope, priest or foreign authority on Earth has power to absolve the subjects of the State from their allegiance to the same, and further that they renounce and believe to be false and wicked the dangerous and damnable doctrine that the Pope or any other earthly authority has power to absolve men from sins described in or prohibited by the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, and *particularly*, that no people, priest or foreign authority on earth has power to absolve him from the obligation of this oath.

"This seemingly preposterous clause," continues Sparks, "was warmly debated. It was vetoed 19-10 with one county divided." But Roosevelt credits Morris with manipulating the wording until the context was practically worked into the Constitution where it remains.

With this record of tolerance in the "land of the free and the home of the brave," Morris naturally finds himself perfectly at home in topsy-turvy Paris. In spite of his hatred of the clergy, however, he is nothing loath to sell the Papal Nuncio a shipload of tobacco! For it was business not diplomacy—well to remember—that brought him to Paris at the outbreak of the Revolution. His errand was to bring suit against the Farmer-General that refused to pay for a consignment of tobacco shipped by his kinsman, Roger Morris. Did the La Fayettees know his record of Constitution-maker? Hardly. In the warmth of their feeling and the graciousness of their hospitality, Morris had a recognized place. A plate was always reserved for him at their hospitable board

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despite his having once asked to be permitted to bring his own wine!

As the Revolution waxed he was often piqued if not angry to have his proposals for the government of France, his suggestions for the manipulation of the National Guard or how best to control His Majesty, amiably or "icily" dismissed by the La Fayettees.

Early as October 1, 1789, he writes:

Proceed to La Fayette. He is surrounded. Clermont de Tonnere—President of the National Assembly—Mme. de La Fayette, Mme. de Staël and M. de S., his friend. They are in committee in the salon. Mr. Short—American Consul—is with them. This is all *petit*. . . . I take a few minutes to tell La Fayette what appears to me necessary to change the administration. I tell him he must have men of talent and firmness. . . . Am to dine with him to-morrow and converse on the subject.

Again: "Selecting a cabinet the Comte de Ségur is named for Minister of Finance. Mme. de La Fayette objects. Says he will not do at all. She is asked to name a minister. She refuses. She knows no one equal to it."

However politics surged; domestic, social or religious obligations waxed, Madame de La Fayette's direction of La Belle Gabrielle and her weekly round of Paris prisons went on. The latter was a work of mercy shared since girlhood with Pauline (Marquise de Montagu), whom Louis XVIII was to greet as "Charity personified." Had not the Duchesse d'Ayen selected for Pauline's baptismal godparents two beggars from the steps of Saint-Roché!

Adrienne, like the Duchesse, thought that money, not employed to defray the expenses necessary to keeping up her station, belonged to the poor. "It was formally for-



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bidden in the family," Virginia tells us, "to take from it the least thing. This principle recognized in theory by all pious persons, but so often evaded in practice, was vigorously followed by my mother."

The winter of 1789-1790 was disastrous for the common people. "The suffering of the poor was cruel, but Court and Society were undisturbed," records the Marquise de La Tour du Pin. After the States-General was metamorphosed into the National Assembly, the people *en masse* were more disposed than ever for amusements. The Court, the *haut monde* of Paris and the provinces were never gayer. Balls, spectacles followed in princely splendor.

Regardless of the gaiety, conscious of the heartless indifference that obtained, Madame de La Fayette continued that winter and for sometime after to bring relief and cheer to Paris prisons. Hers was thus close touch with the pitiable misery of the submerged. She heard its protests born of ignorance or injustices; its unbridled raving against King and Court. Through the eyes of hopeless poverty and misguided law breakers, she deciphered the handwriting on the wall.

The contact clarified, dispelled or strengthened doubts she had fearlessly or guardedly voiced in salon discussions as to the feasibility of the Constitution still in the making. The nation's increasing alarm as to the Revolution's ultimate end, and her growing consciousness of personal danger did not retard her prison visits. Was not courage her birthright?

## CHAPTER XXII

### ADRIENNE AND THE NATIONAL GUARD

**I**T was as Commander of the National Guard of Paris that La Fayette achieved the pinnacle of popular acclaim and met his Waterloo. "The Guard had been founded to preserve both order and the Revolution." In America he had mastered his inherited trade of soldier. "I love the profession of war passionately. I believe myself born on purpose to play that game," he told Comte de Vergennes, War Minister, whom he importuned for a chance to fight the English. Then but twenty-one, he had covered himself with glory, helped to found a democracy, and was for some time after the "most beloved man in France, the best known and feared throughout Europe."

After the fall of the Bastille there was nothing for him to do but to govern Paris in the rôle of Commander of the National Guard, which he virtually organized. This distinction and responsibility conferred by the municipality had the reluctant sanction of the King. It was far from an easy job, but, for the time, it amply satisfied his childlike need to be in the popular eye.

As the capital grew more and more tumultuous, he was sorely taxed to maintain order. There were not a few of his well-wishers who feared "he was very much below the business he had undertaken."

Adrienne saw him head of a revolution; the end no one could foretell. Not a day did she part with him without feeling that it was perhaps for the last time.

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So turbulent grew the masses that La Fayette suggested that insurrections be met by the Mayor reading the riot act to the people, followed by running up the red flag on Hôtel de Ville. The latter was a signal for the National Guard, in defense of law and order, to fire upon the rioters. No sooner were La Fayette and Mayor Bailly agreed upon this drastic measure than permission was sought by the Jacobin faction of the National Assembly to lay upon the altar in Champ-de-Mars a petition for the people to sign, urging dethronement and trial of the King.

The petition was framed in the National Assembly in wake of the King's arrest at Varennes (July 17, 1791) while attempting to flee France in guise of a valet to a Russian lady (the Queen).

Mayor Bailly, astronomer by profession, refused to allow the petition to be laid upon the Champ-de-Mars altar. Regardless of his decision, the originators of the movement laid the petition on the altar and invited the People's signature.

All Paris flocked to Champ-de-Mars, as it had the previous year, to participate in the erection and dedication of the Federation altar—altar of the Fatherland which towered over the city. Its site is covered to-day by the Eiffel Tower, erected in 1889 to commemorate the centenary of the French Revolution.

"Patriotic enthusiasm," writes Madame de Staël, "was so strong that all Paris moved in mass to the Champ-de-Mars Federation of 1790 as it had moved the year before (1789) to the destruction of the Bastille."

Talleyrand, then the Bishop of Autun, offered the first constitutional mass on the altar to whose erection the highest and the lowest contributed jewels and personal service. Before the altar, with hands crossed on heart,



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La Fayette, leading three hundred thousand voices, swore to maintain the Constitution. The King and Queen were the last to take the oath. That day, the La Fayettees entertained at their table in rue de Bourbon two hundred provincials. "The Federation was the last movement of a truly national enthusiasm," concludes Madame de Staël.

How unlike this day of the Jacobin ruse! The crowd was motivated more by curiosity to see what action Mayor Bailly would take than by Jacobin desire for the King's dethronement.

The day was glorious; Nature beamed and all promised well. Unhappily, at the outset, two harmless men were discovered hidden under the altar. The inflammable rabble sensed a gunpowder plot. It rushed under the altar and dragged the unfortunates from their hiding place and literally tore them limb from limb.

Mayor Bailly read the riot act. The Hôtel de Ville ran up the red flag. La Fayette and the National Guard, already on the site, fired—for the people's protection—upon the rioters. Many were killed, more injured. The affair, to La Fayette's lasting discredit, was treasured in the popular mind as the Massacre of Champ-de-Mars. His dramatic gesture on the same spot, so short a time before, was made much of by his enemies.

It is difficult to give any idea of my mother's agonized state while my father was at Champ-de-Mars [says Virginia]. The crowd scattered with cries that it would assassinate my mother and carry her head on a spike before him. I recall the frightful cries we heard as the mob approached; the fright of everyone in the house; above all my mother's joy! For she felt, as the brigands advanced upon her, they were no longer at Champ-de-Mars and my father was saved. She kissed us children rapturously and cried from joy over his deliverance. At the same time, as the danger pressed she took every necessary precaution for

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our safety with a coolness that was a very great relief to us. The guard before our door was doubled, but the brigands [term of the time applied to rioters] were about to enter the house by scaling our garden wall, which gave on to Place Palais Bourbon, when a passing cavalry regiment dispersed them.

In vain the Duchesse d'Ayen urged Adrienne to retire to the country. "My place is here," she said.

Whenever I think of Madame de La Fayette I see her coming down the great staircase of the rue de Bourbon home, her tireless feet winged as Mercury's, her alert face radiant with expectancy.

It is the morning of La Fayette's secret departure from the house. He leaves her alone to confront the Municipalité and the National Guard of Paris. The previous day, he had resigned his command. He knew the National Guard would come to the house to protest and urge his return. He had not the courage to confront them; so, after the manner of many a less courageous hero—La Fayette's most virulent detractors never accused him of cowardice—he hid (figuratively) behind his wife's petticoats.

For long he had wanted to retire to private life. At the zenith of his popularity he rejected a proposition to induce the King to confer upon him the government of the Ile-de-France. He had had the utmost power his heart could wish and he had grown tired of it, he declared. He had commanded absolutely a hundred thousand men. He had marched his sovereign about the streets as he pleased; prescribed the degree of applause he should receive. He could have detained him prisoner had he thought proper. He wished nothing more but to return, as soon as possible, to Chavaniac.

Adrienne heard. It voiced her secret prayer. Her

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silent petition had not fallen on deaf ears! To return to Château de Chavaniac—what happiness!

Then came breaks in the loyalty of the National Guard. They refused from time to time to obey the Commander. They would not mount guard for him when it rained, which was often continuous. More than once he was forced to follow their lead, notably to Versailles, to urge the decisions of the States-General. No wonder! One day they were called to the defense of the King and the Court; the next to defend the people. The bewildered military, not being mind-readers, rarely knew whither they were being led by the gallant Knight on the famous white horse, its ears gay with the tricolors. Discontented with the National Guard's failure to respond to his orders during the riot over the King's contemplated quitting of Paris for Saint-Cloud to receive Easter communion from a non-juring priest, "my father," Virginia writes, "believed it his duty to resign his command of the National Guard of Paris. He charged my mother to receive in his place the Municipality and the sixty battalions who came to implore him to resume command."

It was a delicate, trying position to be so summarily precipitated into. Madame de La Fayette felt it keenly but the end justified it, and she was equal to the situation, as La Fayette well knew. Thanks to her activity in making collections (*quêtes*) for the poor and presiding at the flag raising in the sixty districts of Paris, she had come to know personally the officers of the various battalions of the National Guard.

It served her well. Graciously she responded to the speaker for each battalion, as La Fayette might have done; carefully observing the military nuances, never failing to give to each battalion and officer the proper name and title. Santerre and like malcontents whose conduct



## ADRIENNE AND THE NATIONAL GUARD

had necessitated the Commander's resignation, and who came this day to make the same disturbances, to repeat the same idle protestations of fidelity, succumbed to her tact, patriotism and charm. Santerre, rich brewer, notorious as leader of the wild men from Saint Antoine that assaulted the Bastille, like all his kind, was mightily flattered to be received on an equal footing with an aristocrat. For in the popular mind Madame de La Fayette was an aristocrat and at heart she remained one to the end, in spite of all her protestations to the contrary.

Flattered by their reception, the Guard left the hôtel, relying upon Madame de La Fayette to restore to them the beloved Commander, and to the famous white horse its gallant rider. Nothing was further from her intent. Delicate and embarrassing as was the situation, she was insensible of it, so great her happiness in the thought of his speedy return to private life.

As usual, it was short-lived. Four days later, La Fayette, having established his disapproval of the disorder he was unable to prevent, yielded to the popular demand and resumed his command of the National Guard and Adrienne her painful anxieties.

But it was not without compensation.

No incident of his resumption of command evoked from her greater admiration than his arrest of the King (June 21, 1791). She saw him [continues Virginia] in this instance renounce on one side his republican inclinations in order to fulfill, on the other side, the will of the majority. His position obliged him to take all the blame in order to secure the safety of the royal family and at the same time spare both them and himself, as far as possible, painful details.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### TO NATURE'S LURE

**I**T is October, 1791. The mellowness of old wine fills the air. Madame de La Fayette looks pensively over the tree-tops flanking the gardens of Hôtel de Noailles. How often, the past three turbulent years, have the old trees, souging in the wind, beaten by the rain or shriven by wintry blasts, recalled the bitter-sweets of her childhood, girlhood and those dreadful American wars! Will she ever forget the anguish of the Virginia campaign? Ever look again upon the old trees; stroll care-free in the lovely gardens; pluck a nosegay from the flower-beds of Le Nôtre's design—beds which the master landscape architect declared "were only good for nurses, who, not being able to quit the children, walked on them with their eyes and admired them from the second floor"?

The berlin, equipped for the long-dreamed-of, long-delayed journey to Chavaniac, stands in the porte-cochère. Vaguely she listens to the impatient neighing of the six horses. There is a second carriage awaiting the children, governesses and maids; a third, the steward, chef and his servants. She has taken leave of the dear ones in the great house of storied memories; early that morning kissed the children she would not see again until they reached the first relay. Anastasie is now fourteen; Virginia not far behind. George and his tutor, Monsieur Frestel, will join them later at the Château.

A prophetic serenity possesses Adrienne's fagged brain and weary soul. Unbidden tears moisten her eyes—tears

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for remembrance. Suddenly, above Paris' deafening cries, is the clatter of the courtyard. It wrenches her back to reality. She sees the third carriage turning into rue de Bourbon. After the custom of the old régime on wheels, it goes ahead of the noble to secure lodgings, change of horses and prepare the meals. It is the steward's job to have everything ready for the travelers upon their arrival at a given horse-relay or night stop-over. He sits upon the box with the driver. His word is law to the chef and his handmaids cluttering the rear seats, hungry this autumn day for sight and breath of the blue-veiled mountains of Auvergne. . . .

The King, after a night's deliberation, had accepted the new Constitution (September 29, 1791). It was largely the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," to which the La Fayettees had so signally contributed. The National Assembly terminated at once its sessions, boasting that it had given "permanent institutions" to France, and the Revolution was over.

The next day La Fayette resigned a second time the command of the National Guard of Paris. "The Revolution is ended," he assured Adrienne. "The liberty of France secured."

She asked nothing better than to believe it. To grow old together, as he had so often said they would—she is now thirty-two; to be occupied with the children's education, agricultural methods brought over from Washington's Mount Vernon farm; to ameliorate the condition of the peasants—what labor of love! Of course she would continue to direct, as she had from Paris, the work of liberating the Negro slaves of La Belle Gabrielle. How she loved it! "It is God's work," she said.

With the speed and directness with which her decisions once made were always executed, the rue de Bourbon



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household was immediately made ready to take to the road.

A detachment of the National Guard escorted the berlin through the great city, with its narrow, dirty, unpaved streets to the southern gate. Everywhere cheering crowds—cheers for the horses' tricolor cockades. But strange to the rabble is the beloved Commander in black satin breeches, silk stockings and low, thin, buckled shoes. Where is the uniform they were wont to meet at every turn? Stranger, the round black felt hat, not unlike the King's at the States-General, supplanting the familiar, aggressive top-piece of Monsieur, the Commander. The tricolor cockade in its upturned brim is lustily cheered; the tricolor knot in his great topcoat. The *Gazette* had broadcasted that the retiring Commander was quitting Paris for his birthplace; but the rabble is yet to know, and its unpreparedness for the sartorial change adds to the confusion.

Madame de La Fayette, yielding to coquetry, is smartly capped by the Queen's modiste, Mademoiselle Bertin. Despite the latter's protest, the cap sports the Republican cockade. "If the contour must be broken, Madame," pleaded the modiste, "why not the Queen's colors—green and white?" But her client was not to be wooed from the *tri-couleur* La Fayette gave France. With every turn of her vivacious head the cockade bobs saucily, to the crowd's delight, as it presses close to the berlin's glass window—curtains up for the *au revoir*.

From Paris to Chavaniac is four hundred miles. It is covered to-day by rail within ten hours. At this period, with favorable weather, amenable mud and trustworthy horses and driver, it was a journey of a week or ten days. But this is no ordinary journey; no ordinary travelers that set out this autumn day to be, as they little sus-

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pected, three weeks en route. For with Versailles and the forests of Meudon in the distance, ovations begin with the first village reached. Succeeding villages are increasingly demonstrative of approval of "the rider of the white horse." Anastasie and Virginia, following in the second coach, chafe, protest against the delay. "Shall we ever get to the château?" they worry governess and driver. Then as bands, fireworks and torchlight processions increase theirs is the delight of children at a circus.

The dense ignorance of the masses, the woeful indifference of peasantry and provincials to public affairs in Paris, which Arthur Young attributes to lack of newspapers in the coffee-houses and inns of pre-Revolutionary France, were nowhere apparent this fall of 1791 on the post-road from the capital to Clermont. Brioude, Saint Georges d'Aurac, Rougeac to Chavaniac, the village outside the château gates, were vividly alive with interest. Not a town, not a hamlet failed to arrest the berlin a day or night with addresses by mayor or curé, songs and floral wreaths from the children; patriotic airs by the village band or dress parades of the local militia.

It was night before they got away from Clermont. The city was illuminated. The National Guard carrying torches, "a really charming sight," escorted the home-comers to the main road.

The whole was nectar of the gods to the retired Commander, the brilliant young soldier who had led their King "around by the nose." "I enjoy the change which puts all citizens on the same level and who respect but legal authority," La Fayette wrote from the Château. "I cannot tell you with what delight I bend before the village Mayor."

Weary Adrienne basked happily in the reflected glory of her Knight until the berlin halted at Vayre, the first

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horse-relay beyond Clermont. Only La Fayette knew that the overlong stop there was due to Adrienne's surreptitious meeting in its sordid inn with the Marquise de Montagu. Unknown to her father-in-law, the testy Vicomte de Baume, Pauline with her husband, the Marquis de Montagu, had come on horseback from the ancestral Château de Plauget, atop Auvergne's loftiest mountain, thence cross country to Vayre. She knew the joy-ridden travelers would be forced to stop there for fresh horses. Monsieur de Baume was the last lord of the thirteenth century Château de Plauget. He quarrelled with everybody not of his political opinion. He had ceased, long since, communication with the radicals—La Fayette and the Vicomte de Noailles. He not only avoided meeting them but it had pained him to have his daughter-in-law, upon whom he doted—she was a slave to his whims—receive her sisters in his Paris house. If he was there when they were announced, he instantly seized his hat, and emphasized his displeasure—incidentally his bad manners—by banging after him the exit door.

Pauline could not invite Madame de La Fayette to stop over at Château de Plauget—a halt in the journey upon which she had counted—without risking the testy old nobleman's displeasure. So, stealthily, the sisters met in the obscure inn. There was much weeping, many promises to write, for the Montagus, after stormy deliberation with the Vicomte, had decided to emigrate to England.

La Fayette had no patience with his brother-in-law's decision to emigrate. Had not the King accepted the new Constitution? The young Montagus were much embarrassed by his affectionate greeting, but they held fast to their resolution to "go while going was good."



## TO NATURE'S LURE

They had no illusions. The Revolution was not over.  
Far from it.

Surreptitiously, as they had met, the sisters parted, not  
to see each other again until after many years, and then  
on alien soil, with memories of untold tragedy. . . .

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CHÂTEAU DE CHAVANIANC

THE fortress-château, Chavaniac-La Fayette, crowns a rocky wind-swept promontory in the heart of the sombre, blue-veiled mountains of Auvergne. It was totally destroyed by fire in 1701, but immediately rebuilt after the original plan of the thirteenth century structure with which its history began.

Architecturally, it is a stolid stone pile, relieved against the open sky by two round towers. The unimpressive gate that separates it from the village of feudal days is wide open, this night of late October, 1791. Through an avenue of torches and lanterns, joyously brandished by farmhands and villagers, the berlin lumbers up the lava-made road, belched æons past from the extinct volcanoes of the encircling mountains. The children's carriage follows. The steward's outfit is long since housed on the estate.

At the foot of the south tower, the procession masses. The happy worn-out travelers alight to speed across flower-beds and grass-plots to the Château's main entrance, a low, narrow, unpretentious door suggestive of barrack rather than manor.

Atop the iron spiral staircase stands the châtelaine, Madame de Chavaniac. Seventy-two years young is Aunt Louise-Charlotte this epochal night. With open arms she awaits her boy, grown to world fame; her rover home to stay and cheer her last days. She does not approve of his American ideas. She never will under-

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stand how he could desire for the France his forebears fought and died for, a better ruler than "good Louis XVI." For she does not know now, any more than did the towns and villages through which he had often on this home-coming journey to go afoot, so full were the traveling carriages with the "civic crowns thrust upon him by the populace," how "good" Louis and his "Queen detested him, the nobles abhorred him." Like all Auvergne she little suspected the low ebb to which his popularity had dropped in Paris and Versailles.

But he is *her* boy—all she has. She loves him as only the childless woman can. Had she not coddled him since his birth in the Château's north tower; inherited him—practically—at his father's death when he was only two years old?

She wears a fresh blue ribbon in her white lace cap; wears it as in the portrait I saw hanging, twenty years ago, in the Château salon, where La Fayette in childhood had feasted upon the portraits of his fighting forebears and dreamed of world conquest; the portraits of Comte de Toulouse, stunning in steel armor and lace jabot; Field Marshal Gilbert Motier de La Fayette of the wars of Charles VII, who fought under Jeanne d'Arc and from whom La Fayette took *Cur Non*, down the long line of soldiers to his father in glittering cuirass, helmet and gauntlets at his side, no hint in his frank, boyish face of his untimely end on Minden battlefield. And his mother—Julienne de la Rivière, rising like a fresh half-blown rose from a dark red mousquetaire-sleeved bodice, her shapely, jeweled hand clasping a shepherd's crook. . . .

Adrienne, this home-coming night, is Madame de Chavaniac's beloved daughter, if she does not quite fill the void left by the *jeune fille* lost in her early womanhood,



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the daughter whom La Fayette "loved as never was a sister loved." For steadily has grown the old aunt's affection for Gilbert's wife since the summer of 1784, when she first came to Chavaniac. Her boy was then in America visiting his General Washington. She remembers how Adrienne treasured Washington's letter inviting her to share with La Fayette the hospitality of him and his lady in the Mount Vernon home. Why didn't she go? Time was never riper to see the America she now loved as her own France. Was the Marquis keen for her companionship? We shall never know beyond the fact that the invitation was treasured up to the Revolution, when it perished with all her American correspondence.

Madame de Chavaniac rapturously embraces Anastasie and Virginia. Will she ever forget their first summer in the old Château? How they have grown! And, alas! how inseparable they are to be from her tragic old age!

What life, what bustle the Parisians and their retinue of valets, tutors, governesses and maids put into the old Château of endless suites and countless underground port-hole windows that served for cannon holders in feudal days!

Adrienne takes possession of the tiny suite La Fayette's mother occupied the rare times she came to the Château from her father's Paris house to see her infant. Dearly as she loved the child, she had not the heart to take him from doting Aunt Louise-Charlotte de Chavaniac. Then, Paris was no place to raise a country-born boy. So she tarried oftener at his grandfather's town house where life was gayer than at the isolated Château; and it was in Paris she died. But the suite, in the third story adjoining the natal chamber in the north tower, was kept

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as the young mother had left it and always spoken of as the Marquise's until the coming of Adrienne. The chamber with wall-inserted bed and cradle, the dressing-room—tiny as Marie Antoinette's at Versailles—the sitting-room and chapel, all faced the blue-veiled mountains far as eye could reach.

"Never lovelier country," thought Adrienne, retaking possession of her inheritance. She had occupied the suite on previous visits, and was grateful to yield to the calm that indiscriminately precedes or follows a storm.

Before the week-end George and Monsieur Frestel arrived from rue Saint-Jacques. Early November brought the Duchesse d'Ayen and the Vicomtesse de Noailles. The Duchesse and Aunt Chavaniac, Royalists to the core and one in their love of "my son," renewed the intimacy of the first meeting.

The family was now united, as never before, under one roof. For the children it was the time of their young lives. Everyone, young and old, learned much of each other that was new to them; more of the old Château and its dryad woods, forests and streams than did the permanent inhabitants.

Physically, Madame de La Fayette was not equal to the unexpectedness of this happiness. It was effort untold to ramble with the children over the estate; enthuse with them by the brook that emptied into the huge fountain basin at the garden's edge. What it cost her to see Anastasie and George through their lessons—governess or no governess, tutor or no tutor they were not to be neglected—the children never suspected. But Virginia recalled in after years: "My mother, fatigued by all that she had suffered, could not enter into our happiness with all the fullness of her heart."

The Marquis, campaigning, 1787, for a seat with the

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Notables, had noted everywhere in his native province the unproductiveness of the soil, the crudity of the farming implements, the disheartened impoverished condition of the peasantry. In urging before the Notables abolishment of "taxation without representation" he had cited Auvergne fields lying fallow, the plows abandoned by the discouraged, tax-ridden peasant farmers. It haunted him. At the pinnacle of his Paris popularity and hair-raising encounters in defense of Versailles and the royal family, uppermost in his mind was how to better conditions in Auvergne. Now he was a private citizen. The time was ripe to execute. It was good to find the peasants "released from their bonds and paying but half what they used to, even if they hardly dared to be glad of their freedom for fear of being damned." He would make the farm of Château de Chavaniac a model for the province. He wrote Arthur Young for an English bailiff, as had Washington. The Mount Vernon farm had opened his eyes to France's antiquated agricultural methods. He would profit, as had Washington, by the experience of the English agricultural economist and traveler of pre-Revolutionary France. . . .

"A letter to-day from General Washington," records Arthur Young's diary. "Gracious! from the representative of the Majesty of America, all written with his own hand. . . . Also, one from the Marquis de La Fayette. He desires my assistance to get him a bailiff that understands ornamental gardening. For both he gives fifty louis a year [louis d'or at this time worth twenty-four francs]. This is a French idea to unite what never was united, and, when gained, reward it with wages little better than a common laborer."

Nevertheless, Arthur Young sends the Marquis John Dyson of Suffolk to manage the Chavaniac farm. He





CHAVANIIAC, THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE GENERAL, AND THE FIRST PRISON  
OF MADAME DE LA FAYETTE

FROM "LE CHÂTEAU DE CHAVANIIAC—LA FAYETTE," HENRY MOSNIER



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arrives in December and remains a year; too short a time to make good the dual capacity Arthur Young decried, but sufficiently long to render Madame de La Fayette a service that put John Dyson, Britisher, for all time, through George Washington's correspondence, in the archives of the Congressional Library. . . .

Through November into mid-December life moved serenely in the old Château. The village nestling without its hospitable gate, some sixty grey stone red-tiled-roofed houses sliding down the mountainside rejoiced in the return of "the hero of two worlds," baptized in its sombre old church, as the records reveal, *filis d'un noble et puissant Seigneur*.

The dignified modern church of the village of to-day, covers the site of the original church in which the Marquis and his forebears were baptized. It was built more than half a century ago by Senator Edmond de La Fayette, who inherited the title and the estate through George Washington de La Fayette. During two empires, the Senator occupied the Château, dying there in 1891.

The modern church is rich in prie-Dieu's, with the brass plate of duchesse, comtesse, marquis, or comte, their descendants still occupying mountain châteaux scarcely less renowned than Chavaniac-La Fayette. . . .

The coming of the young châtelaine, this memorable autumn of 1791, to live permanently in the old Château gives the bobbin lace makers new life. Lace making is the village's only handicraft. Now that crops pay so poorly, it is their only livelihood. The Marquise, so good to the poor, will find in Paris big market for their winter output.

Louder than click of the cushion bobbins wag village tongues; higher than the encircling mountains, imagination soars, while Paris . . .



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Already the lauded Constitution of 1791 is being decried as hopelessly theoretical. The Legislative Assembly, the new law-making organ under the new system, elected by a fairly general popular vote, is lost in a medley of philosophy and metaphysics.

There is friction on the frontiers; outbreaks in the interior; threats and counter-threats. Both the Republican members of the "Legislative" and the royalist Court Party desire a foreign war.

Comte de Narbonne, the new Minister of War, apprehensive of foreign hostilities, selects Rochambeau of Yorktown fame, Luckner, a German general who had entered the French service at the close of the Seven Years' War, and La Fayette to command the three armies on the frontier. The King opposes La Fayette, as he had opposed his nomination for Mayor of Paris. "If Your Majesty does not appoint him to-day," answers Narbonne, "the people will compel you to appoint him to-morrow."

Standing on the Château's green knoll overlooking the village and swept this late December day by cutting winds, Madame de La Fayette buckles on her Knight his oft-tried sword. She smothers what would kill a less valiant soul, and smilingly sees him off. Down the lava road to Aurac, skirted with pines sharply etched against the lowering sky, he gallops, until her eyes can no longer discern him. The first milestone in her second Gethsemane is passed. Five years until she sees him again, when disease and dungeon confinement will have so changed him that she will scarcely recognize him.

No time for brooding! Hardly is he off to the frontier than she is on the same knoll—no longer green—unknowingly bidding farewell for eternity to the Duchesse d'Ayen and the Vicomtesse de Noailles. Family affairs call them

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to Paris; but they will be back with "Adrienne dear" in the spring when forest and field are abloom.

With the General gone, war imminent, the Montagus *émigrée*, fear of new troubles replunges her into a *douleur* so profound that for a time heart and soul are dumb. She cannot pray. There is no one to whom she can turn for sympathy or understanding. The violence of Madame de Chavaniac's political opinions prevents her from judging rightly of the actual state of affairs. The children must not have their young lives weighted with her sadness. In Anastasie there is some consolation, but not enough. At the foot of the altar in the Château's tiny chapel her pent-up soul at length finds comfort and renewed strength to hold on. God never puts a burden upon a back not able to carry it, is literally her credo; spiritually the torch that lights her way. Are not her Knight and all her loved ones in His keeping? *Bien sûre.*

## CHAPTER XXV

### FAR FROM THE CROWD

**L**A FAYETTE'S return journey to Paris was a re-echo of the affectionate approbation of the towns and villages through which he had so recently passed homeward. How avidly he had drunk in their praise, assuring the *citoyens*, as he had Adrienne on resigning command of the National Guard, that his fighting days were over! Henceforth he was with France and the Constitutionals in promoting the arts of peace.

From Paris he went to his headquarters at Metz—from which Fate had sent him to America—the Metz where Pershing, one hundred and forty-one years later, on La Fayette's one hundred and sixty-first birthday (September 6, 1918) met the Allied Powers for decisive action against Germany; the Metz that had terrorized Adrienne's early youth and was to color her after life. From there he wrote, four months after his arrival, this letter which will enlighten the reader as to the national situation, more than it soothed its distracted recipient:

Metz, April 15, 1792

. . . I cannot hide from myself that war is likely. There is still hope, but I should bet far more on war. We shall go into camp about May 10. Parties are divided at present in this fashion. Robespierre, Danton, Desmoulins *et al.* make up the Jacobin rabble. These marionettes are moved from behind the scenes, shouting out that we [the Constitutionals] are hopelessly beaten, and they attack me. They say I have deceived the people and the



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Court, that I led astray M. de Bouillé, a far less guilty man than myself, and that I am much more dangerous than the aristocracy. [M. de Bouillé witnessed La Fayette's and Adrienne's marriage.]

The other party [Gironde], known as the *Hauts Jacobins*, that support the present Ministry, is composed of Bordelais, the Abbé Sieyès, Condorcet, Roederer *et al.* They fear and hate Robespierre, but they don't dare risk losing popularity. They deem war inevitable. They appreciate Lückner, think that Rochambeau will leave, and they are agreed, for some time now, that though they hate me personally, they must have full confidence in me as a steadfast friend of liberty and equality and an incorruptible defender of the Constitution.

I have made, through friends, an avowal to the two ministers with whom I have had to do and this will be passed on to the principal members of the Assembly. . . . Here is my position: I have, as I told them, no other party but the French nation. My friends and I will aid anyone who wishes to do right, to defend liberty and equality and to maintain the Constitution; we will reject whatever tends to make it aristocratic or republican, and when the national will (expressed by its duly elected representatives and by the King) shall say that war is inevitable, I will do all I can for its success, to the best of my ability. . . .

Before the letter reached Chavaniac, France had declared war against Austria and neighboring Germany. La Fayette's division was at once in combat with foreign troops. In one of the earliest encounters, M. de Gouvion, an old Major-General of the National Guard under La Fayette's command, was killed. On learning of his death, "my mother," writes Virginia, "was penetrated with terror and pursued by the most frightful presentiments. . . . The troubles of the interior added to her fright. The murder of the royalists at Nancy by Swiss ex-galley slaves, the uprisings at Lille, assassination of General Dillon, the crimes of Jourdan (the cutthroat of Avignon) were nightmares."

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La Fayette's daring letter to the Legislative Assembly, written at Maubeuge, June 16, 1792, denouncing the Jacobins, assailing Dumouriez (Minister of War, successor of Narbonne) and the Girondin Ministry, his call upon the Assembly in words of burning patriotism to sustain the Constitution, was not slow in reaching Chavaniac. It filled Adrienne with mixed joy and terror, for the Assembly was so amazed that it questioned the letter's authenticity. La Fayette, on hearing this four days later, despite the protests of his military associates and warning that the Jacobins would kill him, set out with only his aide-de-camp for Paris.

At the bar of the Assembly he courageously proclaimed himself the author of the letter and reiterated the charges and the demands it made. . . . To know him exposed, four hundred miles away, to so many and varied dangers was untold suffering, borne in silence, for it must be concealed from Madame de Chavaniac and the children. The enjoyment she was accustomed to find in his every move in interest of law and order was now a *mélange* of excruciating pain and wearing suspense.

"My father importuned her to join him," Virginia writes. "In the effervescence of her feelings, she feared that if she did so it might serve a pretext for his calumniators to accuse him of wishing to put his family in a safe place. But greater was her fear that her presence might hamper him in his marches, always subject to so many uncertainties."

She deliberated upon the proposition in the recesses of her heart and at the foot of the altar. On the fourth day she rose from her knees resolved to sacrifice herself and remain at Chavaniac with the children and the violently aristocratic old aunt.

The wisdom of her decision was soon apparent; for

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shortly after, the Revolution made its first tentative invasion of the Château. A battalion of volunteer Girondins en route to join the regular army reached the village. At sight of the Château, the soldiers were greatly excited. "Let's burn it!" they cried.

The officers dismounted and passed within the Château gate. A servant conducted them to the grand salon to await the châtelaine. Outwardly as unperturbed as when receiving undesirables in the rue de Bourbon salon, Madame de La Fayette graciously welcomed the intruders. They were put so much at their ease that they quite forgot they were in the presence of a despised aristocrat. Shortly dinner was announced. Taking the arm of the Captain, whose name she had caught instantly, she unceremoniously led the way to the state dining-room where service had been ordered on hearing of the officer's arrival. Learning that a detachment of soldiers were to be lodged in the village for the night, she instructed the bailiff to see that they were well fed. So noble and patriotic was her manner, so sincere her interest in their views and plans that they were wholly disarmed. They could not believe that they were in the presence, and on equal footing, with the wife of the dethroned idol of Paris, the denounced traitor of France. That night the battalion moved on and the Château was saved.

The incident clinched her generous resolution to remain at Chavaniac, where in common with the villagers, she learned of the terrible Paris insurrection of August tenth, that atrocious crime which was to turn the tide of the Revolution and to inspire historians, dramatists, novelists, poets to produce works that continue to live.

The Paris populace's storming of the Tuileries Palace, its brutal forcing of the Legislative Assembly to suspend the King from office, to imprison him and his family, then



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summon a national convention to give yet another constitution to France, were momentarily lost to Madame de La Fayette. Her consuming anxiety was for the lives of her kindred. For she knew that her father, the Duc d'Ayen, who had gone to Switzerland for his health, had returned to defend the King. He was in the Tuileries when the mob invaded it. The Marquis de Grammont, Rosalie's husband, the *Gazette* reported, was searched for among the dead. The Paris journals reeked with bloody decrees to which every section submitted except at the point on the frontier where La Fayette was in command. Nowhere was there detailed report of his resistance at Sedan.

"Nothing is comparable to my mother's anguish the days that followed," writes Virginia. A price was on his head. Official warning to bring him to the bar of the Assembly, dead or alive, was posted throughout Paris and the provinces. . . .

It is Sunday, August twenty-fourth. Cautiously the non-juring curé is saying mass in the village church. Refreshed, Madame de La Fayette is returning from service to the Château. The air is redolent of mid-summer ripening. The blue-hooded mountains have caught up the heat from the meadows and fields that the peasants, under the English bailiff's guidance, have retilled and resown. Soon the harvesting will be on and the village dance.

So much of God's beauty on every side! So much unhappiness in human hearts! The why, the wherefore, the mystery of it all! A courier overtakes her with a letter. She recognizes Louise's script (Vicomtesse de Noailles). Calmly she breaks the seal and reads: "Gilbert [La Fayette] is outside of France."

"The intoxication of my mother's joy," recalls Vir-

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ginia, "was equal to her despair of the preceding days. Her happiness was in striking contrast with Aunt Charlotte's lamentation, for, unable to judge of the gravity of the situation, she was struck only by fear that she would never again see her dear nephew at Chavaniac."

Madame de La Fayette's anxieties were shared by everybody in the Château, the village and surrounding country. Peasants and gentry came from far and near to congratulate her. "It was all the more touching as she had been warned that a pillage of the Château was impending."

She ordered everybody to burn or conceal letters and papers. In the huge range of the huge kitchen on the ground floor, they made a costly bonfire. Up the chimney's broad mouth, grimy with smoke of boar and venison turned juicily on spits to feast feudal lords and ladies, went Madame de La Fayette's American correspondence, including General Washington's invitation to visit Mount Vernon. All letters covering her work for the liberation of the Negroes at La Belle Gabrielle were likewise destroyed.

Satisfied that every line, every document that might be turned against La Fayette by his enemies was consumed, she considers next the children's safety. A sworn curé comes at midnight to offer her an asylum in the mountains. All the curés of Auvergne, Madame de La Fayette discovered on journeying from Paris to Chavaniac, had been replaced by priests who had taken the un-Christian oath. La Fayette, shortly after his arrival at the Château, had lodged two non-jurors in a house on the estate, which he proposed to keep for a chapel, with the motto *Peace and Liberty*. There lives at this crisis the old Curé of Chavaniac. He is not to be inveigled, despite threats of imprisonment and death, into taking the ob-

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jectionable oath. Unhappily his fidelity to conscience renders him powerless to aid Adrienne in the disposition of the children.

She is forced to accept the proffered asylum in the mountains to which goes M. Frestel, under cover of night, with George Washington de La Fayette, destined for many like surreptitious flights. The same night she sends Anastasie and Virginia to Langeac, a lovely village on the river Allier.

It is the Langeac—irony of fate!—which the Marquis bought for one hundred and eighty thousand livres shortly before the convocation of the Notables. He was on his famous white horse with a military escort, when he took possession of this seignory, one of the most important of Auvergne.

Did Adrienne recall as she bade the children godspeed thither, the Te Deum in the ancient church, Saint Gal, that closed the solemn ritual inducting their father to the seignory? the gladsome cries of the crowd; "*Vive Monsieur le Marquis!*"

The safety of all but Aunt Chavaniac was now secured. No persuading the spirited old lady to leave the Château. Her home, her castle, why quit it? Save aged retainers, Adrienne is virtually alone; calmly she awaits for what may happen. Tranquil days succeed. Seemingly there was undue alarm. When not on her knees in the tiny chapel where centuries of the Marquis' forebears had knelt, there were solitary hours in the gloomy salon. Its huge windows were ever vocal with the love taps and somber with the leafy shade of the encompassing forest trees. But its walls of ancestral portraits which had stirred her Gilbert's boyhood to dream of world conquest lure her engagingly from the ominous present. There is no escaping Louise de La Fayette, maid of



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honor to Anne of Austria. In stately Court costume she confronts the new châtelaine. Her great eyes pursue her. They seem to plead forgetfulness of her flight from the love of Louis XIII. Remembrance only for the Mère Angélique, Abbess of Challiot, the convent she founded in thanksgiving for her escape from the importunate royal lover, and where she died at fifty.

Adrienne well knows that Gilbert is indebted for Château de Chavaniac to the daughter of Charles, Comte de La Fayette, Mère Angélique's only brother. Through his marriage in 1665 to Marie Madeline Pioche de la Vergne, France has its famous Madame de La Fayette, author of the *Princesse de Cleves*, the first realistic French novel. This is the Madame de La Fayette, intimate of Madame de Sévigné, and mistress of Rochefoucauld, whom librarians at home and abroad continue to this day to confound with Adrienne de Noailles—our Madame de La Fayette.

The famous author had an only daughter, Madame de Trémoille. On her marriage, she generously waived her inheritance in favor of the La Fayettes, who had lived for centuries in Auvergne, so they could preserve the name and the estates they held. The Marquis at his birth was the only representative of all branches of his family (which accounts for the six baptismal names wished upon him) who had lived in Auvergne and possessed the Château of the Maréchal de La Fayette called Saint Romain.

"Interesting, wonderful de La Fayette women!" muses Adrienne.

Aunt Charlotte's authoritative patter echoes on the polished floor. It wrenches Adrienne back to stark reality. A Noailles, a de La Fayette daydreaming and a vital

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present at stake! The ominous silence, the brooding uncertainty, the suspense are unbearable.

She decides to go to Brioude. Something may be learned there to Monsieur de La Fayette's advantage.

The break is made ready and away she goes.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### MAJESTY OF THE LAW

**B**RIOÛDE is the chief town of the department of Haute-Loire. A decree of the district had ordered that a seal be affixed there on Château de Chavaniac. Madame de La Fayette had provoked this measure in order to impose its execution upon the brigands (Jacobins), who were always proclaiming its legal enactment without effecting it. Unobserved by the town folk the break drew up, this mid-summer day, at its favorite inn. The inn-keeper promptly recognized his guest, and soon it was buzzed about that the wife of the traitor, La Fayette, was come to Hôtel de Ville. Not a few of the *ancienne noblesse* came down from their ancestral châteaux in the mountains to express their interest in her welfare and to offer the hospitality of their homes. To the aristocratic dames who condoned her plight, Adrienne made it clear that their sympathy was insult and she would have none of it. She wished everyone—noble, citizen, peasant—to understand well that any tribute they brought her, any speech or action which pretended to separate her cause from that of her husband, was intolerable to her. "Much better," she smiled, "to leave it unsaid, undone."

The word *émigré*, it was disclosed, had not been inscribed in the *procès-verbal* she had received from the commissioners who invaded the Château.

The officials of Brioude, contrary to expectation, received her with much respect and apparent kindly feel-



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ing. It gave her hope that she would have nothing to fear—at least from that side of the administration. She went openly from Hôtel de Ville to a church where she heard mass offered by a non-juror curé. She felt she had much to be thankful for and she voiced it fervently. Nevertheless, it was good to get away from the Brioude which, less than a year ago, had made “all the fêtes you can think of,” as La Fayette wrote after their triumphal passage through the town, en route to Chavaniac to take up the arts of peace. It was good to be alone with the mountains, at whose verdant feet climbed and descended the lava road, “mountains rising beyond mountains in endless variety.”

Anastasie and Virginia, heartened by their mother's success, clamored to come home from Langeac, and home they came. They made merry with the *chère mère*, whom they found in high if not gay spirits. They had parted with her in such dire distress, and now—“What is it, *ma mère?*” they pleaded. “Tell us! Tell us!”

Two letters had arrived from La Fayette: one to Adrienne on August 21, the other to Madame de Chavaniac on August 25; both letters, with the General's unfailing optimism, assure the recipients that he will soon be free and they will all go together to America—“the only place where Liberty breathes and all are equal.”

It is from Rochefort on the edge of the frontier he writes Adrienne: “Whatever may be the vicissitudes of my fortunes, my dearest love, you know that my heart will never allow itself to despond. You know me also too well not to pity the anguish I experienced in quitting my country.” He gives details of his arrest at an Austrian post on the road; enumerates the names of the persons with him, most of whom she knows personally. “You know better than I do the list of all the patriots

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who have been massacred, either by the Marseilles or by the orders of MM. Petion, Santerre and Danton. They appear to have attacked those who have served liberty. *As for me my ruin has been long determined . . . but never shall I have anything in common with crime. I have been the last to maintain the Constitution I have sworn to maintain.*" Then comes this declaration, the crux of his consistently often seemingly inconsistent career in France:

*You know that my heart would have been republican if my reason had not given me a shade of royalist opinions, and my fidelity to my oath and to the national will had not rendered me a defender of the constitutional rights of the King. . . .*

I know not how long my departure may be delayed, but I intend repairing to England, where I wish all my family to join me. May my aunt also consent to the journey. . . . The imperial and Jacobin posts will read the few letters I shall write. I care not, provided they reach their destination. *I have never had a single opinion I wished to conceal.*

And to Adrienne's pride and elation he concludes: "I offer no apology to my children nor to you for having ruined my family. Not one of you would wish for a fortune purchased by the sacrifice of conscience. Come and join me in England; we shall establish ourselves in America, where we shall find that liberty which no longer exists in France. My tender affection shall endeavor to make amends for all the enjoyment you will lose. Farewell, my dearest love."

Reading over Madame de Chavaniac's shoulder the letter written four days later at Nivelles, from which he was shortly transferred to Namur to await the decision of the Emperor at Vienna, one senses how incomprehensible much of it was to her closed, aristocratic mind.

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Otherwise it would have given offense. One suspects that the letter was intended for Adrienne, and it is confirmed on coming to: "Mme. de La Fayette and my children are probably no longer at Chavaniac. I much wish, my dear aunt, that you may have consented to follow them. *In any case show or send them this letter.*"

Madame de La Fayette's reaction to the sudden rise of spirits was not slow in coming. His arrest filled her with frightful foreboding. So great was her fear for his safety that thought of her own was wholly lost, to be fully recovered the morning of September tenth, 1792.

At eight o'clock the children were roused from sleep by the clamor of armed people cluttering the courtyard. From the window of her tiny boudoir Madame de La Fayette saw her home invaded by a squad of soldiers. The leader was a man from Le Puy, whom she recognized. He was suspected of taking part there in the recent assassination of a prisoner. With him was a commissioner named Aulangier, a man of very bad reputation. Abruptly they burst into the Château and demanded to see the châtelaine. Hats on, and reeking with snuff and tobacco, they handed her a decree issued at Paris by the Committee of General Security. It ordered her arrest and conduct to Paris with her children. The decree was backed by a letter from Roland (Girondist), the newly appointed Minister of the Interior. It was dated September second. Adrienne's eyebrows lifted interrogatively. Was not that the date of the massacre? The letter charged the bearers with the execution of the decree.

At sight of the soldiers and their mother shut up with the evil-looking strangers, the children were beside themselves with terror. The governess was unable to restrain



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Anastasie. She rushed into the room, clung to her mother and refused to be separated from her.

Calmly Madame de La Fayette dominated the situation. There was no fright, no resentment in voice or manner. Her one thought was to cut the interview short and be quickly rid of the soldiers. One had boasted to her that he had killed his officer because he was an aristocrat. She wished to be near authority that could give her protection. She ordered the horses harnessed and made ready to depart.

From her dressing-room she saw an official pry open her secretary and take from it La Fayette's last letters. The one dated April 18, Metz, says his *Memoirs*, "was written in haste and in the effusion of the most intimate confidence, and there were ten thousand chances to one that it would never see the light." "You see, sir," she said, when the official had read them, "if there had been a tribune in France, M. de La Fayette might have carried his head high, assured that not an action of his life could compromise him in the eyes of true patriots." "The tribunes, to-day, Madame," he replied, "are public opinion."

Meanwhile the soldiers prowled over the Château, stealing whatever appealed to fancy or cupidity. Coming upon the ancestral portraits covering the walls of the salon compactly as the color glass inlays of a Florentine mosaic, a soldier demanded of Aunt Chavaniac's very old, very blind chambermaid: "Whose portraits are these? Without doubt grand aristocrats!"

"They are the portraits of honest people, sir," she replied in sepulchral voice. "If they were living to-day, all would not be so bad." The inquisitor's companions held their tongues. They were content to run their swords through canvases that invited their spleen.

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Madame de La Fayette, escaping surveillance a moment, warned Virginia to hide herself. As for Anastasie, she never quitted her mother and could not be dissuaded from going with her on the harrowing journey.

Aunt Chavaniac, who, under no consideration, social or otherwise, quitted the Château, courageously rose to the fighting blood of her forebears. To the Commissioner, the seventy-three-year-old aristocrat said: "Monsieur, I refuse to be separated from my niece. I will go with her, even to Paris."

"*À la bonheur*, Madame," he replied; and she made ready for prison.

It was midday before the prisoners and their body-guard turned, from the Château colorful in early autumn bloom, into the worn post-road to Le Puy. Madame de La Fayette, flanked by soldiers, sat back of her aunt's trusty old driver. Aunt Chavaniac and Anastasie occupied the rear seats. This child whose birth was the comfort of the young mother in a far-off but scarcely less painful loneliness was now doubly comforting. Mounted on horses the commissioners led the cortège. Servants of the Château and peasants from the fields made themselves useful to the family by mixing with the battalion.

Through "nature tempestuous in all its forms as billowy ocean" the volcanic road wended its mysterious way. Æons past, some stupendous wrath of the gods must have met in a gigantic sulphurous conflict to have produced mountains of such dark and dreary manifestation of cruelty and power. "Cruelty and power," thought Adrienne, "devastating as the unbridled passions and devouring ambitions of evil-minded men; devastating as the blind acts of misdirected authority."

As the day waned, all the pinks and reds, the purples

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and carmines of nature's palette, all of fire, coral, flesh, the flowers of perennial sunrises and sunsets, played on the mountains, to the mockery of the sorry procession. Here tower of a château, there turret of a fortress frowned from eery heights upon the ill-assorted humans jogging doggedly over the rugged road.

In spite of the fear the military escort inspired, every village crossed manifested interest in and sympathy for the prisoners. But it was far from a joy-ride!

At Fix the soldiers refused to push on. They complained of fatigue. The Commissioners were willingly forced to yield to them. The weariness of the prisoners was immaterial. The battalion bivouacked outside the village church, which law had closed. Authority opened it to receive the prisoners. On the uncushioned benches of the choir loft the plucky old Madame and courageous Anastasie, without protest, made ready for "nature's sweet restorer." Within the sanctuary rail Madame de La Fayette kept vigil. . . .

There is nothing so dominant as brief authority in the custody of ignorance or intolerance. Before reaching Le Puy, Madame de La Fayette said to the Commissioner: "Monsieur, will you kindly conduct me immediately to the district authorities?"

"I respect the orders of the Administration," was the pompous reply, "as much as I detest those that come to me otherwise."

As the military entered the town, Le Puy was affrighted. A few days before, it had seen a prisoner massacred in its main street. As the cortège progressed, there were ominous cries. Stones were hurtled into the carriage but failed to injure the occupants.

Anastasie threw her strong young arms protectingly around her mother. "How disturbed your father would



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be if he knew you were here," Madame de La Fayette said, "and how well pleased he would be with you!"

The members of the department were assembled as the cortège halted and the prisoners alighted at the Court House entrance.

Notified that the session was convened, Madame de La Fayette, in custody of the bodyguard, entered the Chamber, grim with age and flamboyant with newly acquired authority. From the box reserved to law-breakers, she addressed the president of the Department:

"Monsieur, le président," she said with the dignity inseparable from her, "I place myself with confidence under the department's protection. I do so because I recognize in it the authority of the people; and wherever I find that authority I respect it; you receive your orders from M. Roland or from whomsoever you may. As for me I do not wish to receive them but from you. I consider myself your prisoner."

The Commissioner pompously handed over the letters he had taken from her secretary.

"May I ask, sir," interposed Madame de La Fayette when authority had scanned them, "that copies of the letters be made before they are sent to Paris? I should like to have one copy of each letter remitted to me, for I have observed, sir," she added poignantly, "that often lies are told the Assembly."

The authorities of Le Puy were summoned. One by one they traipsed into the stuffy chamber. The village élite flocked and craned for sight or sound of the prisoners. Madame de Chavaniac was no less a curiosity than the traitor's young wife. Was she not the *grande dame*, and all her forebears Auvergnat noblesse?

Madame de La Fayette watched authority fumbling over the letters. From the box she called out, "Monsieur,

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le président, may I have your permission to read the letters aloud?" The crowded Chamber rustled. An official objected. "Madame," he protested, "the reading would be too painful to you." "To the contrary, Monsieur," she smiled assuringly, "the sentiments they express sustain me. They are my greatest consolation."

One by one the letters were handed to her. Her clear, resonant voice was under perfect control. As she voiced La Fayette's fearless, courageous, chivalrous patriotism—the patriotism she knew so well how to articulate convincingly—the Chamber was emotionally stirred. Not for a moment, however, did she lose sight of her perilous position. Nothing distracted her from making the most of every incident.

The Mayor of Le Puy, Monsieur Bertroud, on her arrival had shown marked kindness. Fearful that his courteous consideration might compromise him and lead to accusation, she openly reproached him before the Court for not having been to Chavaniac for so long a time.

The letters read and the copies compared with the originals, she asked permission to address the Department, and it was given.

She argued against the injustice of her detention at Le Puy; demonstrated the inutility and the dangers of a journey to Paris. She had her great-grandfather's (the famous Chancellor of France) gift of argument, and it served her well.

"If the Department persists in retaining me as a hostage," she concluded, "it will render a very great service if it permits me to remain a prisoner at Chavaniac. I give you my word I shall not leave it."

At a second session the request was thrashed out. With courageous zeal and devoted care, Monsieur de Montfleury, the president of the Department of Haute-Loire,

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overrode every objection and her request was finally forwarded to Monsieur Roland, the Minister of the Interior.

To the President's dispatch Madame de La Fayette added this letter to Monsieur Brissot, now of the Girondists—the Brissot formerly associated with her and La Fayette in working for the gradual emancipation of the Negro slaves. Once La Fayette's extravagant eulogiser—he literally lived off the Hôtel rue de Bourbon table—he was become his deadliest enemy.

Madame de La Fayette's letter (the first) to Monsieur Brissot:

Le Puy, September 12, 1792.

MONSIEUR: I believe you to be sincerely fanatic for liberty. It is a compliment I pay to very few people at this moment. I shall not examine whether that fanaticism, like religious fanaticism, does not generally defeat its own object, but I cannot persuade myself that one who has done so much for the emancipation of the negroes can be the agent of tyranny. I believe that if you are impassioned by the ends which your party seeks, at least you will abhor the means it employs. I am sure that you esteem, I might almost say that you respect, M. de Lafayette as a sincere and courageous friend of liberty, even when you persecute him because his opinions are different from your own as to the means of establishing freedom in France, and, supported by courage like his and by faithful adherence to his oaths, are contrary to the party in which you have enlisted and to your new revolution. I believe all this, and therefore I apply to you although disdaining to address myself to others. If I am mistaken, tell me so, and I shall have troubled you for the last time.

A *lettre de cachet* from M. Roland, of 2d September, in compliance with a resolution of the Committee of General Safety, dated August 19th, caused me to be brought here on Monday last by an individual, Justice of the Peace, in this town, who had received orders to convey me to Paris with my children, if they were found with me, after communicating with the "Department" of



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the Haute-Loire in the jurisdiction of which I had fixed my retreat. I state with sorrow that the *Procureur General* had the weakness to give M. Roland's commissary an order syndic for an armed force, and with gratitude that the commissary and his men paid us every sort of attention on the way. My eldest daughter was with me, and, far from trying to hide herself, she rejoiced that the orders were common to us both. An aunt of my husband's for whose sake I remained separated from him all last winter, has been kind enough to accompany me here.

When M. Aulagnier, the Commissary, asked me where I desired to be conveyed in this town, I answered that my wish was to put myself under the protection of the municipality and go to the "Department" whose business it was in the town of Le Puy to give orders at Chavaniac, my place of residence, belonging to the district of Brioude and to the Canton of Paulhaguet.

What I said on entering the Assembly room, and what was decided upon by the Conseil General and the Commissary who arrested me, is recorded in the official report, in which I expressed my wishes and made known my request to the "Department." My aunt desired me to speak of the fatigues of a journey after the many trials my health has undergone, but I would not allege a pretext when I had such good reasons for not going to Paris.

I was about to speak of the dangers which the events of September 2d made one fear, but, having asked the date of M. Roland's letter and having found that it had been written on that very day, I was desirous of sparing remarks which might be wounding to his feelings; for, although I do not wish to address myself to him, still I would not insult him. I merely said to the members of the "Department" that, as I was under their protection, it was their business to foresee and to prevent the dangers I might have to fear. They intend writing in concert with M. Aulagnier, and I shall trust to their prudence.

I do not know what the answer will be. It is easy to see if it is dictated by justice it will restore me to complete liberty. If it is according to my heart's desire, I shall be allowed to join my husband in England as soon as he is delivered from prison in order that we may go to America and establish ourselves there

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together as soon as the voyage can be effected. But if I am to be kept as a hostage, my captivity would be less hard to bear were I to choose Chavaniac as my prison on parole, and on the responsibility of the municipality of my village. If you wish to serve me you will have the satisfaction of doing a good action by mitigating the fate of one who is unjustly persecuted and who, you well know, has neither the means nor the wish to injure.

I consent to owe you that service.

NOAILLES-LA FAYETTE

This since famous letter was dispatched by messenger to Paris. As for Madame de La Fayette, she said it was in the hands of heaven.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### IN DURANCE

THE prisoners, awaiting Roland's decision, were confined in the Hôtel de Ville, the administration building of Le Puy, and were "fairly comfortable." There was no red tape in seeing them. Permission was asked and obtained without fear. The interest of the village was touching. Often Madame de La Fayette was guarded by sympathetic soldiers of the National Guard. They solicited the charge in order to spare her the annoyance of inconsiderate surveillance.

She had news of George, concealed in the juring curé's mountain refuge; and of Virginia, who, after her mother's departure, was hidden with the governess a few miles from Chavaniac. However tolerable the prisoners' physical situation, the political news that filtered to them from the outside was sinister enough. The moderate administrators in Paris and Auvergne had seized a favorable moment in public affairs to resign, and they were replaced by Jacobins, now violent extremists. On top of this upheaval came word of La Fayette. He had not been liberated. He was given over by the coalition to the custody of the King of Prussia and had been conducted from Namur to Spandau.

Madame de La Fayette was beside herself with anxiety and self-upbraiding. Why had she given her word to remain at Chavaniac? To be cut off from all means of rejoining or serving him was maddening. . . .

It was the end of September before Monsieur Roland's



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reply to the Department's request arrived. He permitted her to return to Chavaniac on parole, under the responsibility of the administration of Le Puy. But he had been wounded by several phrases of her letter to Monsieur Brissot, which the latter purposely had shown to the Girondist "in Quaker garb." Aside from the official document, Monsieur Roland wrote a personal letter full of insulting references to La Fayette and impertinences to her. It closed with: "the expression you employ, '*de consentir à lui devoir un service*' [I consent to owe you a service] belongs to the superannuated pride of those formerly known as the noblesse."

It was a hurt and a charge to be frequently repeated through subsequent imprisonments—a charge La Fayette did not escape even from his devoted friend Thomas Jefferson. In every instance, it was well taken. Neither could wholly discard the inheritance of centuries. It was ineradicable as the birthmark that intrigued Hawthorne's alchemist. And *au fond* both remained, although neither suspected it, aristocrats.

Roland's presumably personal letter was read "aloud to the Department and deliriously applauded! The closing phrase—'*I consent to owe you a service*'—was repeated three times."

The permission to remain at Chavaniac contented Madame de La Fayette for the moment; then fright over La Fayette's situation possessed her—fright not only at the danger he ran from the powers in whose custody he was, but from the *revolutionnaires*. For days the Jacobins had been crying in the streets "Kill him!" Had not Robespierre foamed to the seething Jacobin Club: "*Strike La Fayette down and the nation is saved*"?

She could not, and she *would* not evade the promise she had unfortunately made, to remain under guard at

Chavaniac. It was equally impossible to quit France. Any attempt to that end was futile, so stringent had become the regulations governing the movements of the noblesse. To add to her despair, the Department of Haute-Loire proposed to the municipality of Aurat, the commune in which Chavaniac is located, that it should guard the prisoner on its own responsibility. It was some shock to the municipality; it was greatly disturbed over the meaning of the word *responsibility*. "Does it mean that Madame de La Fayette is permitted to remain at Chavaniac?" asked an official. "In that case," said he, turning to her with Gallic grace, "I alone will answer for you, Madame, because you are a brave woman."

The Department decided that the commune of Aurat should supply six men each day to guard the prisoner. It was notified to send the men to the Department for instructions as soon as it learned of this resolution.

Indignant, Madame de La Fayette, true to the blood of her forebear, the famous Chancellor of France, Henri d'Aguesseau, fearlessly arose to her own defense. "I declare, sirs, if guards are put at my door I give no more guarantee than the word I have already offered. Choose, sirs, between the two securities. I am shocked that you do not believe me an honest woman. My husband has proved, much better than I, that he is a good patriot. Permit me, sirs, to believe in my own probity. Do not reinforce my verbal promise with bayonets."

The Department agreed to dispense with the guards. The municipality of Aurat, however, was instructed to render every fifteen days a report of the prisoner's presence at Chavaniac.

Before quitting Le Puy, Madame de La Fayette, for whom the word she had given to remain at Chavaniac was become unbearable, wrote a second letter to Brissot.

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He had not replied to her first letter except through his communication to Monsieur Roland, which was injurious to her. He had, however, obtained the permission she asked, and had begun, she learned, to separate himself from the Terrorist party.

Here is the letter which was found, as was the first quoted, among Brissot's papers after he was guillotined:

Le Puy, October 4, 1792, day previous to  
my departure for Chavaniac

I ought not, Sir, to write to you, considering the use you made of my letter. But the feelings of revolt that have sprung up in my heart at my unjust captivity, at the hard necessity of applying to the enemies of the object of my affection, and at the hackneyed calumnies addressed to me by M. Roland, are surpassed, since yesterday's news, by my deep affliction and alarm on hearing of the captivity, even still more terrible than mine, of the one who deserves, more than I do, to be free. Do not longer expect to find bitterness in my expressions nor the pride of oppressed innocence.

*I plead my cause with the sole desire of gaining it.*

I have written to M. Roland by the last courier. I had already read in your gazette—the only one that contains any news of my husband—that he had been separated from M. de Maubourg and de Pusy, and transferred to Spandau. His misfortunes, the risk his health is running, what I have to fear, what I have to learn—all these sufferings are too heavy for me to bear while I am separated from him. When I reflect how utterly useless to my country are all these tortures of my heart, I do not believe anybody can persist in binding me by an engagement too lightly taken, but which is the price put upon my captivity. Truly, Sir, it's attaching far too much importance to my person and too little to the prolongation of an act of injustice, to thus protect my confinement.

After all that your interest has obtained for me, after your courageous conduct in withstanding a bloody faction, I do not believe that you cannot and will not obtain from the Committee



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a cancellation of its decree. That decision was taken at a moment when it was feared that M. de La Fayette's opinion might encourage citizens in their fidelity to the Constitution. I feel certain that M. Roland's order, which is entirely founded upon that decision, should also be revoked, and that *complete freedom should be restored to me.*

It is impossible that a certificate of residence in the prisons of an enemy for devotion to the cause of Liberty should not be worth for the wife of M. de La Fayette the advantage that the wife of an artist finds in a certificate testifying that her husband is travelling to instruct himself in his art.

I shall not speak of the barbarity of keeping wives as hostages, but I shall say that it is now completely impossible for my husband to harm or to serve any cause. Allow me to repeat that it was only when reduced to the last extremity that he gave up serving the cause of liberty.

I confess, Sir, I shall never believe that he who has so long sought to obtain the abolition of negro slavery can refuse to employ his eloquence in delivering from slavery a woman who asks for no better liberty than of locking herself within the walls, or at least near the walls, of the citadel of Spandau. M. Roland is good enough to assure me that he is persuaded *I could not or would not do any harm.*

Then I must be set free, for according to the principles professed by M. Roland himself "*good must be done to all with the least possible harm for each.*" Let foreign enemies alone gratify their hatred against a sincere friend of liberty. Do not join with them in persecuting him through those most dear to his heart. Let them see that in our country are to be found courageous representatives of the people who abhor useless crimes and defend innocence, at least when it is weak and suffering.

I hope soon to receive an answer to this letter. You can see by my words how utterly miserable I am, but no expression can describe the distracted state of my mind, nor the gratitude I should feel towards my liberators, however great the suffering they have hitherto made me endure.

NOAILLES-LA FAYETTE

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Shortly after this second letter was dispatched to Brissot, Madame de La Fayette learned that Monsieur Roland was outspoken against the September massacres, in which Royalist and Moderatist prisoners cramming the Paris jails were put to death.

"He is the only one that can free you from the obligation you have contracted," she was told. Swallowing her pride and her aversion to him, she wrote Roland:

SIR: I can only attribute to a kind feeling the change you have brought about in my situation. You have spared me the dangers of a too perilous journey, and consented that my place of retirement should be my prison. But any prison whatsoever has become unsupportable to me since I learned that my husband has been transferred from town to town by the enemies of France and is being conducted to Spandau.

However repugnant it may be to my feelings to owe anything to men who have shown themselves the enemies and the accusers of him whom I revere and love as I ought to do, it is in all the frankness of my heart that I vow eternal gratitude to whomsoever would enable me to join my husband by releasing the Administration from its responsibility, and, in event of France becoming free, giving me back, if it were possible to do so without danger, my parole.

It is on my knees—if necessary—that I implore this favor. Imagine by that the state I am in.

NOAILLES-LA FAYETTE

This letter, as had been those to Brissot, was intrusted to Monsieur Beauchet, husband of her former chambermaid. On his return from Paris to Chavaniac, he reported that Monsieur Roland in reading the letter seemed greatly moved. Cheered by this passing hope, she lost no time in acknowledging his reply, in which he wrote, "It seems to me imprudent for a person bearing your name

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to travel through France on account of the unpleasant impression attached to it at the moment, but circumstances may alter. I advise you to wait. . . . I shall be first to seize a favorable opportunity."

Alas! "the unpleasant impression attached to the name she bore"—had she not awakened to its tragedy that first day before the Le Puy tribunal? How her fighting blood boiled! How her soul struggled for mastery over the revolt of pride as she confronted the revilers! It was but the beginning of affronts born of a name whose possession was henceforth to be her greatest danger. That it was a name dearer to her than her life the Revolution disclosed when many wives of emigrés, in order to protect their own and their children's fortune, were forced to divorce husbands who had fled the country. This way out was not for Adrienne.

"My mother," says her daughter, "esteemed and even respected the virtues of many women who availed themselves of this subterfuge. But it was not for her. The delicacy of her conscience would not permit her to save her life by pretense of an act contrary to the Christian law, even when the formality deceived no one. Her feelings carried her to enjoy all that recalled my father. While pious and tender women sought salvation in a simulated divorce, she never addressed a request to an Administrator or presented a petition without signing it '*la femme La Fayette*.'"

"What noble imprudence of heart," wrote the La Fayette of later years, "to be the only woman in France compromised by a name she did not wish to change."

Shortly after forwarding her second letter to Brissot, Madame de La Fayette learned that Roland was outspoken against the September massacres—the atrocities prompted by Danton's edict: "We must make the Royal-



ists fear." In desperation she swallowed pride and aversion to the Girondist and wrote the letter cited.

I thank you, monsieur, for the ray of hope you make shine in my heart, for long little accustomed to the feeling [was her acknowledgment of Roland's reply]. Nothing is to be added to what I owe to my word to the administrators who depend upon it. Excess of misfortune could not make me think of failing to keep it, but your letter renders this duty a little more supportable. Already I begin to feel something of the gratitude I have promised if you make me free so that I may return to the one I love and have some consolation in offering it to him.

Under guard of the administration of Le Puy, the prisoners returned to Chavaniac, where the municipality assembled to welcome them.

"M. Roland," said Madame de La Fayette to the Le Puy escort, "believes that because I am an aristocrat it is bitter to me to owe him a service. I feel, however, it is a great pleasure, and I find myself much honored to be under the protection of the Commune of Aurat because I esteem it so highly."

When the Le Puy escort had departed, there was a supper to the municipality of Aurat. Seated at the head of the table she had graced so short a time before, to the preservation of the Château from fire of a passing volunteer regiment, she proposed the health of Monsieur de La Fayette. Every man rose, glass and voice lifted. Washington and Franklin, in marble, looked down from brackets flanking a bookcase of more than a thousand volumes on American wars. A fac-simile of America's Declaration of Independence and the French Rights of Man held up the ends of the spacious banquet room. All were the mute witnesses to loyalty's wet pledge!

The same night, at a witching hour, faithful Frestel

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escaped from the mountain retreat, and stole into the Château to plan with Madame de La Fayette the disposition of George. In her grief at being so far from La Fayette, she wished to send to him their son. She fancied if the boy were outside of France he could reach his father and in some way serve him.

It was decided that George—he was now thirteen—should set out the next day with the tutor in search of his father. Monsieur Frestel would provide himself with a pedlar's license and a passport to the fair at Bordeaux. From there the quasi-hoboes planned to ship for England. In the London home of Mr. Pinckney, the United States Minister to Great Britain, it would be decided what could be done for the release of the imprisoned father.

Distrustful of her strength to part again from the child, Madame de La Fayette heroically denied herself the consolation of seeing him before he set out on this wild goose chase—wild as any La Fayette had fathered.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### ENTREATING THE MIGHTY

THE joy of being back at Chavaniac and the excitement of George's adventure to Bordeaux having simmered down to normalcy, Madame de La Fayette's days and nights went to beseeching the seats of the mighty.

In the bandbox boudoir off the north tower abreast the blue-hooded mountains and safely remote from Aunt Chavaniac's inquisition, she wrote and wrote and wrote. Expression came readily, for her heart was overflowing, but chirographically it was often a sorry performance, for like most French women, not convent bred, hers was a microscopic, almost undecipherable hand. It rarely kept to the line and had a way of running uphill. Conscious of its illegibility, her letters—outside family correspondence—were copied. Only the clean, legible duplicate was forwarded to the Mighty.

Naturally her first written appeal on behalf of the Marquis was to his idol—Washington. The English beaten, liberty achieved, where could she find a more powerful intercessor than the first President of the United States? She implores Washington to reclaim his "beloved son" as he dubbed the Marquis after the Battle of Brandywine, from the "powers that hold him captive and to conduct him to America." . . . "Shall I speak what I hope?" she naïvely asks. "I would ask of America through you to send an envoy to reclaim him in the name of the Republic of the United States, wheresoever



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he may be retained, and who may make in their name with whosoever powers he may be, the necessary arrangements to emancipate him from his captivity and carry him to their bosom. . . . If his family might voyage with him to America, it is easy to judge what their happiness would be. But—[always considerate of others]—if that would be an obstacle or in any way retard his release, I implore you not to think of us. We will be less unhappy when we know he is near you.”

Reasonable request it seemed to the distracted Adrienne writing out of her heart's blood, and reasonable it seems from the vantage of the present. At any rate, worthy more than the “calm, non commital document which expressed the kindest sentiments but pledged him to nothing” that Washington wrote in reply. A reply that did not reach her until long, long after it might have been a heart ease!

This is her only letter to Washington that the Manuscript Department of the Congressional Library possesses. It is in two forms, neither of them original. One is a contemporary English translation, dated as was the original, October 8, 1792, but hardly made at that time. The other (three pages, quarto) is a copy in a letter of John Dyson, the English bailiff of the Chavaniac farm, who wrote Washington of Adrienne's pitiable plight, from his home, Gunton, near Lowestoft, Suffolk. “I have written,” he concludes, “and shall send two copies of Madame de La Fayette's letter lest by some accident one of them should miscarry.”

Evidently, one copy did reach General Washington, and marked in his fine script “From the Marchioness de La Fayette” it reposes with John Dyson's note in the Washington Collection of the Congressional Library. Where is the original?

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

This first letter off to Washington, Adrienne's quill was not idle. For three months she had no news of La Fayette. The journals merely announced his transference to Wesel instead of Spandau. She hungered for details that were not to be had for love or money, so concerted was the action of the press and the Allied Powers in suppressing everything pertaining to his fate.

Never in world history, she was to learn, was a hero so universally acclaimed, so genuinely loved, hurled over night, as it were, from loftier heights to lower depths of obscurity, than was her heart's desire, who had truly said: "I have conquered the King of England in his might, the King of Prussia in his authority, the people in their fury."

The Duke of Brunswick was now Commander-in-Chief of the coalesced armies. He was bent upon the demolition of the Republic, the liberation of the King, who was virtually a prisoner in the Tuileries, and the protection of the French Monarchy. To Brunswick's untimely manifesto: "The city of Paris and all its inhabitants must make immediate submission to the King and give him complete liberty" coming on the heels of the Assembly's vote rejecting a move for the impeachment of La Fayette for his bold denunciation of its violation of the Constitution is credited the precipitation of the fatal August 10th—that atrocious assault of the Parisian populace upon the Tuileries—which ended with royalty in the Temple.

Madame de La Fayette wrote an open letter to the all-powerful Duke. She implored him to forward her some news of the French Army. The letter, unsealed, was enclosed with a note to Monsieur Servan, the French Minister of War, beseeching him to pass on the letter to the Generalissimo of the coalesced armies. To the ever-faithful Beauchet, unfaltering as his wife in danger—

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ous service, she intrusted its delivery to the War Minister.

By the time Beauchet reached Paris, Monsieur Servan was no longer Minister. Monsieur Pache, his successor, refused to be responsible for its delivery, despite the presence of Lebrun, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who was well disposed to forward it to the Duke. Madame de La Fayette never had a reply from the Duke of Brunswick. In all probability her letter never reached him, for the Paris Government, like all Europe, by this time was disposed to suppress every move that made for La Fayette's liberation.

Undaunted, Monsieur Beauchet came back to Chavaniac and advised her to write direct to the King of Prussia, asking the liberation of his prisoner.

Gouverneur Morris was now United States Minister to France. Morris, indefatigable letter-writer and chronic constitution-drafter, forwarded to Chavaniac the model of a letter he would have Madame de La Fayette write to the King. She considered it entirely too humble, too self-abasing. She refused to copy or to sign it. "She believed," says her daughter, "that she was obliged only to speak to the King of Prussia of his loyalty, a quality to which he then made pretension of possession."

In the *Life of Gouverneur Morris* edited by Jared Sparks (1832), his letter is printed as having been really written by Madame de La Fayette; natural error, admits Virginia, as only the copy of Morris' original was found among his papers.

Comparison of the Morris draft with the letter Madame de La Fayette did write the King emphasizes the nuance between commoner and aristocrat in addressing royalty by divine right!

The uncertainty and danger inseparable from the de-



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livery of her letter to the King of Prussia troubled her greatly; for Louis XVI's trial was on, and Europe held its breath. But she was painfully distracted from dwelling upon public affairs by the continuous and violent grief of Aunt Chavaniac over the departure of George. Adrienne had adroitly concealed the boy's whereabouts, but, through some household indiscretion, the old lady discovered it. The painful subject was taboo, but it continued the object of their secret thoughts and wishes, which were far apart and irreconcilable.

It was Madame de La Fayette's ardent desire to have her son out of France. At the moment of Aunt Chavaniac's despair she believed he had embarked. The hope was kindled by a letter from Monsieur Frestel at Bordeaux. But there were too many unsurmountable obstacles, and the faithful tutor hid with the boy in his parents' home in Normandy to await the first favorable opportunity. It was soon evident that escape was impossible and he brought George, minus pedlar disguise, back to Chavaniac.

"I'm ready to make another attempt," said Monsieur Frestel. "What do you suggest? A clue, a hint and we are off."

Her ingenuity was exhausted. She hadn't the strength to go through a second separation. With mingled joy and grief she consented to George remaining at Chavaniac. For a few days it was consolation to have him near; to see the happiness he gave his sisters and the doting aunt. For the time she quite forgot Washington's silence.

Life in Paris was moving at break-neck speed—so was Death. Monsieur Beauchet, after undue absence, was back with appalling news. The King was condemned and executed. Christendom was horrified; the civilized world

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stunned. Britain, Spain and Holland joined Austria and Prussia in declaring war against France.

Monsieur Roland was no longer Minister of the Interior. This to Madame de La Fayette was greater loss than the death of the King. She had counted upon settling with La Fayette's creditors in the Department of Haute-Loire. She had written Roland a personal note, saying she could not trust her affairs elsewhere for fear of exposing her defenders.

Roland, true to his promise, had obtained, from the Committee that ordered her arrest, release from her word.

The first use she made of her liberty was to go to Le Puy on behalf of La Fayette's creditors. Before expatriating herself, she felt it was her sacred duty to see that his debts were paid.

Aunt Chavaniac had spent her fortune upon the beloved nephew to whose American ideas she attributed, in her inmost heart, the ruin of France.

Back and forth from Le Puy Adrienne traveled, presenting to the Department the rights of the creditors to be paid, but she could not persuade it to profit by the ease the law yet gave to pay the debts with secreted property. She argued her personal right to the revenues due from La Fayette's possessions and obtained them. In addressing the Department, she always began with a protest against the injustice of applying to La Fayette the emigré law.

The freedom for which she had fought so valiantly was illusionary. Monsieur Roland's successor, Monsieur Garat, decided against her. She had to give up going to Le Puy and be content to record his creditors.

For some time there was talk of the Government selling La Fayette's property at auction. It began with the

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sale of the mill at Langeac, the village that hid Anastasie and Virginia during their mother's first arrest. Aunt Chavaniac wished to acquire the mill on credit. Madame de La Fayette went with the old lady to Brioude, where the auction took place. "Citizens," she said, "before the sale I feel obliged to protest against the enormous injustice of applying the emigré law to one who at this moment is a prisoner of the enemies of France. I demand of you to act upon my protestation."

Brioude's authority listened with respect. Some members of the administration proposed to insert her protest in a *procès-verbal*. "No, citizens," she replied, "that would do you wrong and I should be sorry. It is not necessary to compromise yourselves in order to be polite when it is not done to evade an injustice. As for me, who, thank God, has never been the accomplice of anyone, I do not wish to be one here by my silence. I demand that you make a separate act of my protest." And it was done.

Meanwhile, sight was not lost of the consuming desire of her life—the liberation of La Fayette. She never allowed an opportunity, however chimerical, to escape her vigilance. In a journal Beauchet brought from Paris, she read a letter of the celebrated Klopstock, the Polish patriot, in which he spoke kindly of La Fayette. That was enough to set her quill on the up-hill run. Two Italian plasterers, who had received permission to return to Italy, posted the letter, which presumably Monsieur Frestel copied.

Gouverneur Morris advised her to write to the Princess of Orange, the sister of the King of Prussia. The idea was at first most distasteful, for it recalled La Fayette's disastrous liaisons in 1787 with the Dutch patriots. It stirred no kindly feeling; however, nothing



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must be neglected; everything was worth attempting. She wrote to the Princess.

Under like compunction she wrote to Monsieur de Luchesini, the Dutch Minister. He did not reply; but the Princess did, politely expressing good-will, but giving no positive hope. Nevertheless, the letter reanimated tireless Adrienne, so optimistically did she hold to the slightest thread making for the lift of his prison bar.

All the while not a word from Washington. Did he, like the Jacobins condemn "my beloved son"? The suspense was torture. Then she learned Washington was re-elected President. She sent him congratulation and a long letter recapitulating her plight. "*. . . I dared not sign my first letter to you nor even write it with my own hand.* Has it reached you? Was it necessary to excite your interest? I cannot believe it! But I confess to you, Monsieur, that your abandonment of M. de La Fayette in all the evils and your silence of the last six months are inexplicable to me. I hope it will not continue forever. If ever I am to see his face again, to be reunited to him, the hope of accomplishing it still rests upon your goodness and that of the States he helped to found."

## CHAPTER XXIX

### NO ESCAPE

THE end of March, 1793.

Chavaniac with all France rocked to the treason of Dumouriez. The "soldier of brilliant parts" had accepted pay of the British Government. France was sold!

It is the Dumouriez whom the King, forced by the Girondists of growing power in the Assembly, had appointed Minister of War. The Girondists were from the Gironalt Valley near Bordeaux. Originally they were modernist and their real leader was the famous Madame Roland.

La Fayette, with command of the north frontier, had been in close touch with the new War Minister. Roiled by growing insubordination in the army and rebellious insurrections in the provinces, he had lost no time in naïvely instructing "the intriguing soldier-politician" how the business of government should be conducted. "Make laws, royal dignity, religious liberty respected," he wrote Dumouriez. "Oppose aristocratic plots, protect prisoners of war from maltreatment, etc., etc. . . . If the government does this, I will recognize it and work under it."

How the Dumouriez of "great military talents" must have itched to sabre to the heart the commander of the northern front!

As Minister of War he had his innings. He ordered the three generals, Rochambeau, Luckner and La Fay-

ette, to advance on the Belgian frontier before they were ready. The order violated an agreement that no move should be made until all were prepared. He cut off La Fayette's supplies and failed to provide transportation for his artillery. It was a deliberate plot, La Fayette believed, to wreck the campaign and throw the blame upon him. But luck and his popularity with the countryside furnished horses—carried him to Givet and the situation was met. The Minister of War was eventually dismissed by the King, and Dumouriez had succeeded to La Fayette's command at the northern front. And now he is denounced a traitor!

Mentally, Adrienne relives the treacherous whole. France's incorruptible patriot is vindicated. Dumouriez, as La Fayette had declared, was "an aristocrat in disguise working for the counter-revolution." From this consoling thought she turns to literally confront representative Jean-Baptiste Lacoste. He had rudely forced his way into the Château. He was from Brioude, instructed to search the papers of all *ci-devant* nobles. He finds nothing suspicious in her possessions. Nevertheless, his presence gives rise to fresh anxieties. "I shall arrest Madame de La Fayette," he had boasted on passing through Aurat. Everywhere throughout the department he distributed pamphlets written by himself against the Girondists. He reviled La Fayette.

To prevent an order of arrest, Madame de La Fayette goes to see Lacoste at Brioude. He receives her politely.

"I have heard, sir, there is question of imprisoning *ci-devant* nobles because of the treason of Dumouriez," she said. "I come to declare to you, as I have before, I am under every circumstance delighted to be Monsieur de La Fayette's security, but I cannot in any manner be that of his enemies. Besides, my life or death is of little



consequence to Monsieur Dumouriez. It would be much better to leave me in my retreat. To take me from it will not modify my record. To the contrary, it will only reawaken memories of much injustice. I ask that I may be left with my children in the only place which may be supportable to me while their father is prisoner of the enemies of France."

"Citoyenne," said Lacoste, "those sentiments are worthy of you."

"Sir, it does not embarrass me to know they are worthy of me," she replied. "I desire only that they shall be worthy of *him*."

Lacoste changes his tune; his voice softens to confidence. "It is only a question for the Department to make arrests," he explained, "as is being vigorously done in the Ardennes, where it is forbidden by law for three or more nobles to meet together in a particular house or walk together in the street. *Ce projet n'eut pas de suite*."

The increasing crimes in Paris and the provinces keep the Château in continuous agitation. It affects the children until they can neither eat, sleep, study nor play. Madame de La Fayette neglects nothing that might lessen their restlessness. She strolls with them along the gurgling brook in shadow of the fascinating mountains, feeds the fish in the great basin of the fountain, enters into their games and sports, even to their delight falling off the donkey as had Mademoiselle Marin at Meudon. Tranquilly she listens to their lessons and reads to them amusing tales, which they treasure to old age, recalling the timbre, the intonation of her voice.

But there is no getting away from Paris' increasing barbarities. The persecution of the priests is to her beyond belief. It spreads to the provinces with spectacular violence. Several curés perish at Le Puy and Brioude.

## NO ESCAPE

The curé of Chavaniac is arrested in the village. Madame de La Fayette does not despair of saving him. She importunes Monsieur de Montfleury, who had served her so effectively at Le Puy, to save the unfortunate curé. His case is tried at Aurat before a jury of peasants. The Mayor of the village, also its surgeon, is secretary. He skilfully conducts the trial and the faithful curé is acquitted. The verdict, in short, is so favorable that no one at Brioude dares to execute it.

Madame de La Fayette goes to Brioude. She finds the curé in a very bad state. His friends, seeing no other escape, are pressing him to take the constitutional oath. Others are intimidating or menacing him. It is decided to await the opinion of the Department before liberating the prisoner. "The surest way of losing him," she concludes. And she sets to work to delay the departure of the official instructed to carry the case to Le Puy. She wins the administrators from forcing the curé to take the oath. With skill and energy she manipulates both the indifferent and the intolerant until the curé is liberated and taken back to his home.

This triumph of personal service is one of the principal charges brought against her in the frightful days that followed; for curiously, like Marie Antoinette, it is her most just, most unselfish and gracious acts the Terrorists turn to her discredit.

In the Château chapel she continues to gather the pious women of the village. To pray with them and assist in the holy sacrifice of the mass, from which they are debarred by closure of the village church, is her solace, comfort and strength. But it is not to escape denunciation, for, failing to find her guilty of aristocracy, authority now talks loudly of her fanaticism.

For a brief time the events of May 31st, which con-

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firmed the triumph of the Terrorists: Danton, Marat, Robespierre—scarcely ruffles the Château's routine. Its effect on Paris, however, took from Madame de La Fayette all hope for the future.

By the middle of June, through the diplomacy of the United States Minister, she had two letters from La Fayette. They were written in Magdeburg jail and gave such ill report of his health that she was more determined than ever to join him. How leave Chavaniac; how pay La Fayette's remaining debts?

She wrote to Gouverneur Morris. She offered to relinquish to him, as security, her property rights, if he would provide her with the necessary money. He replied, Virginia tells us, "in the most generous manner, delicately adding that he ran no risk, for if the advance were under any circumstances lost he knew America would make good."

On receipt of the Morris loan of one hundred thousand livres out of his private funds to discharge La Fayette's debts, Madame de La Fayette wrote him at once: "Were it any other person it would be very painful to me to incur such an obligation as I am now contracting to you; but I think of him to whom I am indebted for the steps taken in my behalf, of those who with me are to receive the benefit of them, and I feel the consolation rather than the weight of these obligations."

Monsieur Beauchet arranged the details of the transaction. The loan was used to pay the creditors whose claims had not been registered, and the rest went to defraying the daily living, reduced to the strictest economy. . . .

Of this loan Morris' diary, summer of 1793, notes: "Mme. de La Fayette writes, desiring I would officially pledge the U. S. as security for certain sums due by her



## NO ESCAPE

estate and which, not being exactly in line marked out for creditors of emigrants, might not be allowed in liquidation. She stated that his honor and hers stood pledged. . . . I informed her that it was inconsistent with the dignity of governments to appear in such affairs; I had no right to dispose of public property, but so far as my own would go for her relief she might count on every aid in my power."

November, 1793, the diary notes: "I paid Mme. de La Fayette 100,000 livres in assignats at par (instead of silver under par), and by the obstacles thrown in the way of all negotiations it became to me an object of very serious inconvenience."

The resistance of Lyons to the Terrorists quickened Madame de La Fayette's hope to quit France from that town. Then Lyons was captured and the devastating crimes that overtook the unfortunate town added to the world's horror of France.

Her cup, it seemed, could not hold another drop. But deep in her soul vibrated to her strengthening the words of Saint Paul: "In proportion as our sufferings increase also increase our consolation in Jesus Christ."

## CHAPTER XXX

### SHACKLED

OVER the age-worn lava road from Chavaniac to Aurat jolts a Government cart. This mid-September day in 1793, the driver is a Commissioner of the Revolutionary Committee of Paulheguet. The cart is loaded with the spoils of his day's search of the titles, letters, documents, suspected of "taint of feudalism" extracted from Château de Chavaniac. Draughts made of the most incriminating evidence of aristocracy are secreted in the Commissioner's inside pocket.

Atop the pile, serving as jocular paper weights, are marble busts of Louis XVI and Mirabeau. With every jolt of the cart, they wiggle as in life did the originals in meeting or evading issues not to their liking.

How comes here, in marble or any guise, the Mirabeau "jealous and envious" of the by-gone popular hero who denounced him, long before this September clearance, "an enterprising and able rascal?"—the Mirabeau Gouverneur Morris vainly warned La Fayette was "so profligate he was not to be trusted and would disgrace any administration," the brainy Mirabeau who had plotted his rival's death? It is one of a legion of enigmas Revolutionary France leaves posterity to solve.

The marble bust of Washington and the sword forged from steel bars of the Bastille, presented to La Fayette with much *éclat* by the populace that cheered his return to Chavaniac, the Commissioner discreetly leaves to the Château.

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The cart is making for Aurat, where, at the driver's command, its load will enhance a patriotic bonfire in the village square. The villagers, instructed to dance around it, to save their skins, are preparing for the fête. It will be your "outward expression," they are told, "of your approval of the Revolutionary Tribune's latest decree, which includes all *ci-devant* aristocrats suspected of 'feudal taint.'" The decree also covers, as they learn next day, even obscure honest patriots who in any way had protected a *ci-devant*.

The bonfire and dance were originally scheduled for Chavaniac, but the village, when it learned that Madame de La Fayette was to be arrested the same day, refused to participate. Sullenly the peasants see the cart of suspect goods depart; fearfully they watch a detachment of the National Guard arrive. Monsieur Grauchner, Commissioner of the Revolutionary Committee, leads the soldiers through the Château gates. Madame de La Fayette had been notified the previous day, but, considerate of others, she dissembles, and the household that gathers in her chamber while the order of arrest is read to her is dumb with terror.

"Too old; not viséd by the Committee; good for nothing," said the Commissioner, brushing aside the certificate of citizenship given her by the Commune. Unperturbed, she asks: "Citizen, my daughters will not be prevented from following their mother?"

"Yes, madame, they will be."

"The law includes me," cried Anastasie. "I am sixteen years old." The Commissioner was visibly touched. For distraction he recounted all the arrests he had made in the neighborhood.

Madame de La Fayette would like to have slept that night in the church at Aurat, where all the arrested



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women of the Canton were corralled. Her request was denied. "I will return to the Château to-morrow [September 13] before nine o'clock," snapped the Commissioner, "then we will set out for Brioude with all the suspects of the Canton."

Her invincible courage is contagious. "The separation will not be long," she whispers to the distracted mothers of Aurat, torn from their crying babes, to the consternation of those permitted to remain.

With beating heart and wounded pride, how often she had gone over the road to Brioude! How often since the triumphant home-coming of the fall of 1791! Then all Auvergne was hers "to have and to hold." And now——

The "detention house" at Brioude was crammed to the doors, but there was always room for one more. Madame de La Fayette found herself in the midst of aristocratic dames, from whom she was wholly divorced since the Revolution. At first they were disposed to be "catty." Uncertain as to how she might react to the wrongs they knew they had done her, they purred. But the prisoner's only thought was to avoid contact with them. She was confined in a room occupied by three persons, including a pious bakeress. They received her kindly, as eventually did everyone, including the aristocratic dames, so irresistible the admiration she always evoked.

The "house of detention" had as many social coteries and cliques as the Paris *haute monde*. They mutually detested each other. The "star" prisoner, as authority regarded Madame de La Fayette, was too absorbed with her own thoughts to be conscious of the bickering that went on ceaselessly. For she soon realized there was no escape; nothing for her but greater evils. Despite this

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conviction, desire to be useful dominated. Often she pleaded for the parole of prisoners who did not know how to present their requests. She demanded better air for a sick woman in a small room with a dozen others. It raised such a storm of protest that she did not dare to repeat it. Otherwise the Committee were often more considerate of her than of other suspects. To serve those less fortunate, aside from gratifying a natural impulse, relieved her from dwelling on excruciating Paris news.

For some time her mother and sister, the Duchesse d'Ayen and the Vicomtesse de Noailles, were at Saint-Germain, caring for the aged Maréchal de Noailles. After his death they came back to Paris. To avoid arrest in Hôtel de Noailles, they took—after the Tuileries Palace riots—a house in less turbulent quarter. For long she had not heard from them. Where were they now? Had they gone back to Hôtel de Noailles? Had they escaped arrest? Doubt, uncertainty, racked her soul. Occasionally she had word from the children at the Château. On the back of the laundry list enclosed with her linen, delivered weekly at the jail door, they wrote, and in like manner the mother replied when the soiled linen was sent back. It was the only communication, and, fearful of discovery, the correspondence was limited to health reports. The sixteen-year-old daughter of a Brioude inn-keeper sometimes carried dinner to Madame de La Fayette. Insults, blows were all one to the courageous girl if she could get glimpse of the prisoner and bring news of her to Chavaniac.

Early January, 1794, all intercourse ceased. It was impossible to bribe jailer or enter the jail. Dauntless Frestel took upon himself to overcome this perilous situation and succeeded. Every fifteen days he was permitted to conduct one of the children to the Brioude jail. Anas-

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tasia was the first to go. She set out at night on horseback, rested the next day at "the excellent Mme. Palatin's inn" and passed that night with her mother. Next day they literally had to be torn apart. Sometimes the trip was useless because of some unsurmountable obstacle. Only once did Virginia see her mother. . . .

Another sale of La Fayette's property was posted at Le Puy. Madame de La Fayette, believing it would be to her advantage to be present at the sale, asked permission to go, guarded, if necessary, by fusiliers. Monsieur Frestel carried the request to Le Puy. *Citoyen* Solon Reynaud, President of the Department, refused to grant it. He poured such torrent of abuse upon La Fayette that Frestel returned with sinister foreboding.

"I would like to tear out his bowels," hurtled *Citoyen* Solon Reynaud, "and make that 'personification of de Noailles pride,' his wife, swallow them! Their children," he added, "are vipers the Republic nurses in its bosom."

Shortly after, Reynaud left the department. At first the Château was relieved, but it was soon disillusionized, for he went to Paris where he was more hurtful than in Auvergne. His successor, representative Guyorden, boasted loudly of his Republican simplicity, and as proof gaily wore a wooden collar, and a wooden fork for *boutonnaire*!

Miraculously Madame de La Fayette thrived in health and courage. Indefatigably she served her associates, among whom was a blind religieuse. She proposed they keep house on the co-operative plan. She persuaded them they were sharing the expense, which she largely defrayed. She did the cooking. (Hôtel de Noailles had six distinct classes of servants.) It was a hard task, hard and painful as the living, for she slept in a room with five or six



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persons, and only a screen separated them from a main, traveled thoroughfare.

The quarrels between so many social sets, shut up in such small quarters, were continuous. Madame de La Fayette's gentle spirit would have suffered were she not soon plunged into profound affliction. Her mother, sister and grandmother, for some time in Hôtel de Noailles under guard, were transferred to the Luxembourg Palace, long since converted into a Revolutionary prison.

The ninth month of the Republican calendar (May) was in full bloom when Brioûde was ordered to conduct her to the Paris prison, La Force. Monsieur Gissaguer, a beloved brother of the Monsieur de Montfleury who had saved her from the execution of the first order to Paris, was Captain of the Gendarmerie—country police. He was charged to execute the order. He went to her room and handed her the Committee of General Surety's written instructions. He had not strength to tell her the contents, which was his duty.

"It is not to the Revolutionary Tribunal that I am called, Mesdames," she said assuringly to her perturbed companions. "I am only transferred to Paris."

She sought Monsieur de Montfleury, now held in the detention house, to decide what she should do. Monsieur Gissaguer had said the order called for her transference from brigade to brigade. To avoid this annoyance, he offered to accompany her by post. "Do you think it possible I might escape en route?" she asked. Captain Gissaguer assured her attempt to escape was impracticable. She decided to depart with him. Thought of escape, however, did not leave her while she was still free of Monsieur Gissaguer's responsibility. She communicated it to Chavaniac. Fear, if she did so, that severer restrictions might be inflicted on her companions, finally deter-

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mined her to think no more of it. Departure was delayed twenty-four hours.

From the granary where the religieuse of Brioude were imprisoned, she was conducted to the criminal court to await Monsieur Frestel, who no longer was permitted to enter the "house of detention." Chavaniac thought she had left Brioude for Paris when her message caught Frestel. He set out at once, without the children, lest they impede his speed. He took with him to sell the little jewelry the Château and peasants offered, so that Madame de La Fayette might escape transportation in a hand-cart from brigade to brigade. Arrived at Brioude, Frestel found everybody, even Jacobins, dismayed. He readily obtained a second twenty-four-hour delay and speedily brought the children to the criminal prison. They found their mother alone in a "horrible chamber." Handcuffs lay on the miserable pallet, upon which she had thrown herself for a brief repose. She tried to hide them from the children's wet eyes; but there was no deceiving them.

Frestel, it was decided, would follow the prisoner's carriage to Melun. Nearby was Gouverneur Morris' country place. The United States Minister might yet prevent imprisonment. Anastasie was desperate. Through Frestel she obtained her mother's permission to accompany him to the Minister's house to implore his aid. From deepest despair she passed to violent joy. It seemed her mother would never get started! After a short rest in the Brioude "house of detention," she left for Le Puy for the permit to journey outside the Department. With government protection she would then join her mother on the road.

Virginia and George remained shut up with their mother in the "horrible chamber" they never forgot.



VIRGINIA, MARQUISE DE LASTEYRIE, YOUNGEST  
DAUGHTER OF MADAME DE LA FAYETTE

FROM THE PORTRAIT IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. STUART JACKSON





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With the prisoner they knelt down and prayed with all the fervor of their innocent bruised hearts. It was the octave of the Ascension. Together they repeated the prose of *Veni, Sancte Spiritu*. She gave George commissions for Aunt Chavaniac, alone, eating out her heart in the Château.

"Misfortune made us all reasonable that day," recalls Virginia. Midday the prisoner set out for Paris.

"If I die," was her final parting, "seek and seize every opportunity to recover your father."

Anastasie, in the interval, despite a thousand obstacles, had finally reached Citoyen Guyardin. She implored him to take her mother's message and forward it to Paris. He kept his seat and continued to write while she poured out her soul in supplication. He refused to read Madame de La Fayette's letter. "I can't be bothered with a prisoner ordered to Paris," he said, punctuating the refusal with the grossest pleasantries, until Anastasie—she had her father's temper—seethed with indignation. He denied her permission to leave the Department or follow her mother's carriage. She went at once to Aurat. The municipality had given her mother a certificate of citizenship. One from it might be useful to her. The villagers interceded in the strongest terms, but authority decided it could not issue a passport to a *ci-devant* noble.

The desperate girl had to part with Frestel and return alone to Chavaniac. The tutor had scarce time to get his passport viséd and overtake Madame de La Fayette at Melun.

"There goes the busybody in defense of one who ought not to have it," said an official as he speeded away.

At Fontainebleau a mob held up the carriage with the most atrocious proposals. Throughout the journey the prisoner avoided speaking of her position to the guard.

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The thought of escape pecked at her with the pertinacity of a pestiferous fly. She feared it might penetrate him and carry him to fleeing with her, and thus expose to danger his brother, Monsieur de Montfleury, who had served her so valiantly. Not until Paris was reached did both admit they were pursued by the same temptation. For they knew, before reaching Paris, that the Committee of Security had raised the list of massacred to sixty victims a day. Everything seemed to assure she was going to certain death.

At Melun, Captain Gissaguer retired and left his prisoner alone with Monsieur Frestel while he went to seek Gouverneur Morris. Would the United States Minister recall that his first welcome on French soil was at the Hôtel in the rue de Bourbon, and it was Anastasie who sang for him one of his own compositions? In Frestel's absence, Madame de La Fayette wrote to each child.

"Pardon from the bottom of your heart, *ma chérie*," she wrote Anastasie, "those who refused you the consolation of following me."

Morris' diary notes:

When Mme. de La Fayette was brought up to Paris, she sent a person to me to communicate her situation and that of her children and to propose an advance of credit to the amount of 150,000 livres in order to complete some arrangements which they had *imagined* at Chavaniac. This advance I declined, not only because the plan they had formed appeared to me unwise, but because I had not the money to dispose of. . . . I authorized the person employed to assure them that the United States would take care of them. This I cannot doubt of. I flatter myself that they may all be united at some future day in our hospitable regions and that they will have cause to speak with gratitude of the bounty of America.

In the meantime, during the two months Frestel guarded her interests outside the prison door



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we lived [writes Virginia], off what the peasants brought us out of the goodness of their hearts and the money the people of the village loaned my Aunt. Every day it was reported that my sister was to be taken to the Brioude "house of detention" and my brother and I put into a hospital. . . . The Château and furniture were sold over our heads. My Aunt bought back her bed and a few necessities, but the portrait of her brother [La Fayette's father] her consolation since the Battle of Minden, was taken away.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE CITY OF TERROR

**I**T is the eve of the "Festival of the Supreme Being." Madame de La Fayette is come to the "city of damnable days and dreadful nights." During the Brioude imprisonment, the Christian religion was wholly suppressed in Paris. Churches were closed; royal sepulchers profaned; celebration of the mass was a crime, as in the days of the Catacombs. The atheistic delirium reached its climax (November, 1793) in the blasphemous festival of the "Cult of Reason" in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The statue of the Blessed Virgin was dethroned; a dissolute Paris opera singer substituted, and on the high altar the unfortunate creature danced to the wild plaudits of a mad rabble—the scum of Paris.

As counter-irritant to this "extreme atheistic demonstration"—"curiously hateful to him"—Robespierre, now the most powerful man in France, demanded a "firm belief in a Supreme Being as the corner-stone of his Utopia." To that end he instituted the "Festival of the Supreme Being" (June 22), three days before the decree which launched the Reign of Terror.

Through Paris streets drunk with blood and abnormal heat, riotous with anticipation of the morrow's orgy in which Robespierre officiates "ridiculous in the garb of a pagan High Priest," Madame de La Fayette's carriage comes at midnight to La Force.

Monsieur Beauchet is at the prison gate. "I forbid you," she said to the faithful servitor, "and all my

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friends"—significantly her weary eyes embraced her traveling companion, Monsieur Gissaguer—"from further effort to alleviate my condition. You have brought me safely here, why uselessly compromise yourselves and risk your lives? I forbid it."

The appeal did not prevent Monsieur Beauchet's wife from peering for two consecutive days through the wicket door of La Force. Assured that the prisoner was still there, she forwarded the news to the panting hearts at Chavaniac.

The prison was packed with the dissolute women of the streets of Paris. The life was unbelievable. Every day its increasing horrors surpassed all Madame de La Fayette's vivid imagination had pictured. How could she live through it?

Her greatest danger was in her name. But she ignored, one after another, everything that made for her end. She trembled only for the loved ones shut up in the Luxembourg. To inquire for them would reveal the bond between them and increase not only their danger but her own. Fifteen horrible days and nights of agony and despair!

A convoy from La Force now brings her to the ancient Jesuit Collège du Plessis, long since converted into a Revolutionary prison. It is the college where La Fayette was a student and from which he came, his first holiday, to the garden of Hôtel de Noailles, wearing the smart uniform that had caught Adrienne's color-loving eye.

In the vanguard of the convoy are two women of eighty-four and seventy years respectively. In deference to their age they are put into a carriage. Madame de La Fayette and the rest of the unfortunates are carted over the streets, hooted at by bystanders, who draw imaginary



knives across their own throats, lest the prisoners momentarily forget their ultimate end.

After much knocking in the dark, Le Plessis' huge iron gate opens and the sorry procession passes to the main entrance. A man in dressing-gown, with an enormous bunch of keys dangling from its belt, receives them. He swings a lantern as the prisoners pass through several iron gratings. At the last grating drunken jailers surround them: "great heavily-built men, half naked, sleeves rolled up, red caps on their heads, with speech to match their costumes." In wake of the jailers, both suspects and accused file, two by two, through the iron gratings holding up each floor, until the top of the building is reached. There Madame de La Fayette is locked in a room with four women she had never seen before. The keeper takes everything from her but fifty francs.

"A guard will answer your call," the prisoners are told. Iron bolts spring ominously and she is alone with her miseries. Keeper Haly, "strange man," comes into the crowded room, next morning, at eight o'clock. At his heels is an enormous dog. He greets the prisoners gaily, as if they were in an old château in the midst of joyous life.

Only after repeated requests is permission given to descend six steps for water. Most of the jailers are drunkards—selfish, rapacious and liars. A few are absolutely ferocious. One of the latter is a sculptor, known to have taken part in the September massacres in 1792.

Fearful that the crowded condition may make for sickness, Commissioner Grandpré orders the prisoners to exercise in the courtyard. They object strenuously to going down a hundred steps, passing through six iron-grated doors, preceded, accompanied and followed by armed guards. For some time they hold out against it.

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"Disregard my request," he warns, "and you will be charged with aristocratic opinions." That meant the guillotine! They take the daily walk. The courtyard is a small gravelled square, enclosed by plank fences, sentinelled by gendarmes, who never take their eyes off the prisoners. Among the latest arrivals are twenty women from the Conciergerie. In sepulchral whispers they confide to the courtyard promenaders the horrors of that ante-chamber of death. Had they not seen great numbers go daily from it to the guillotine? Of this the Le Plessis prisoners were as innocent as of everything that went on outside their cells; for to have a newspaper brought into the prison was an unpardonable crime. One of the best guards caught in the act was removed to another prison, put in irons, and only the fall of Robespierre saved his head.

Madame de La Fayette enters the courtyard. Dazed, she lifts her great asking eyes and they fall upon her cousin, the Duchesse de Duras. Since the Revolution they had not seen each other. The Duchesse's pronounced aristocratic opinions had cut off all intercourse. Common misfortune now brings a speedy reconciliation, to be ever affectionately preserved.

The Duchesse de Duras is better known as Madame de Duras. She was the only daughter of the Maréchal and Maréchale de Mouchy. The Mouchys were a younger branch of the house of Noailles. She was the only sister of the Prince de Poix and the Vicomte de Noailles, the husband of Madame de La Fayette's eldest sister, Louise. The Duchesse and the Duc de Duras had been powerful at the Court of Louis XV and the Spanish Court, where the Duc was the French Ambassador. Indeed, so solicitous was the Duchesse for the Spanish-French alliance against England that she was charged

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with worrying the Spanish Queen to the point of frenzy.

Before Marie Antoinette fixed her assemblies in the drawing-room of "that Polignac woman" (governess to the royal children), Madame Genlis tells us, the Queen occasionally passed the evening at the home of the Duc and Duchesse de Duras. "The Duras always had a brilliant party of young persons to meet the Queen (then the Dauphiness). They introduced a taste for trifling games such as questions and answers known as 'Boston,' blindman's buff and the like. . . . The rage extended from Versailles to every house in Paris where young women gathered. After the birth of the Dauphin, Madame de Duras was spoken of for governess, but her wit and knowledge quite frightened the Queen."

From the most brilliant court of Europe—the fashion arbiter of the civilized world—to the prison courtyard of Le Plessis; from the stately dinners of Hôtel de Noailles and the vivid salon of rue de Bourbon to the gateway of the guillotine!

Drastic fall—materially—for the blue-blooded cousins! To Madame de Duras' thinking it was the radicalism of the conqueror of Cornwallis, now denounced "Father of the Revolution," branded traitor to his country and prisoner of the Allied Powers, that not only estranged her from her cousin but brought them and theirs to their undoing.

The King and Queen were dead; sovereigns in whose court all their kindred had shone. Madame's parents, the Maréchal and the Maréchale de Mouchy ("Mademoiselle Etiquette") were imprisoned in the Luxembourg. They had been there five months before the Noailles joined them.

Irony of Fate! The Maréchale's cell was the chamber in which she was born of a Spanish mother, and from



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which she went a bride to the Court of Louis XV! Often she spoke of it.

A price is on the head of Madame de Duras' eldest brother, the Prince de Poix, "the purest light in Parisian society." Her youngest, the Vicomte de Noailles, escaped to London, awaits there his wife, the angelic Louise. Too long she tarries to care for the aged grandfather, the Maréchal de Noailles, until his death, then to comfort her mother, the Duchesse d'Ayen, and the eccentric grandmère, the Maréchale. Knowing nothing of her fate, the Vicomte awaits his wife's arrival; together with their children they shall sail for the America for whose liberty he had fought as valiantly as La Fayette. In the land of the free they shall live with freemen.

Madame de La Fayette, as we know, had learned before quitting Brioude of her mother, grandmother and sister's incarceration in the Luxembourg. From there they had written her cheerful letters.

After La Force she finds the rules of Le Plessis less severe. Thanks to the meeting in the courtyard, she has a room to herself, the first in her prison experience. "How often she told me," writes Madame de Duras, "her extreme pleasure on waking to find herself alone." It is a fifth story mansard—a room so small she cannot put a chair between her bed and the wall. Fortunately there is a recess where with some effort she can sit down. She thinks it palatial; especially since discovering scratched with charcoal on the wall *Gilbert du Motier!* It is the room the eleven-year-old La Fayette had occupied on his first arrival at the Collège du Plessis, with his tutor, Abbé Fayon.

On the same floor, Madame de Duras occupies what was formerly "the philosopher's warming place." It is

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the only room with a fireplace, and it warms all the coffee-pots of the corridor—a continuous procession that does not make for privacy.

To have Mme. de La Fayette so near [wrote Madame de Duras] was very pleasant. Her virtues and kindness had suffered no change from the life she had been compelled to live during the first years of the Revolution. The possibility of opening my heart to her with regard to my family, of my anxiety of which I had never spoken to anyone, did me much good. We wept together, each over her own fate. She seemed to be much less prepared than I was for the general and particular evils that threatened us. She thought only those were in danger who had committed some serious or trifling injury to the Republic. It took me a fortnight to set her right and enable her to realize her situation. Indeed, what passed before our eyes was more eloquent than anything I could say. . . . The number of victims carried off increased daily. The public accuser arrived at all hours. Impossible to describe the terror excited by the opening of the great gate. Everyone thought the fatal order had come for him. Hearts and minds were overwhelmed with fright; faces filled with terror. The bailiffs went through the corridors calling out the names of those who were to go off. They were allowed only quarter of an hour to prepare. They bade each other an eternal farewell. Madame de La Fayette and I were in a stunned condition; sure only of living from ten in the morning to seven in the evening. . . . Our experiences had convinced us that people are the same in prison as elsewhere—false, jealous, intriguing, spies on every side. We often spoke of our solicitude for food, our laughter in the face of death. . . .

A very amusing thing happened to Madame de La Fayette. A woman asked her to compose a petition for her, which she did with her characteristic readiness and kindness. As her handwriting was bad, she charged the person to have it copied. The woman stupidly sent it to a prisoner who was a good patriot. He was so indignant at its want of civism that he sent it back with the re-

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mark: "This is aristocratic. One never uses such phraseology. This is not *civic*; it has the *odor of a château*. This person does not know how to draw up a petition," etc., etc. How often, how heartily we laughed at the severe criticism her kind action aroused! . . .

Pentecost Robespierre permitted us to adore God, provided we did not call Him by that name! Prisoners and jailers danced in the courtyard. One boasted to us of the speed of the Revolutionary tribunal trials. "To set things right," he declared, "it will be necessary to cut off seven thousand heads." . . .

Madame de Duras tells Madame de La Fayette how she was separated from her parents and brought from the Chantilly prison, the former *château* of the Count de Conti, to Le Plessis, despite her entreaty to be permitted to join them in the Luxembourg.

Failing for some days after Mme. de La Fayette's arrival to get a letter from my parents [she recounts] I was distracted. A great many Le Plessis prisoners had husbands in the Luxembourg. I was struck by their embarrassment when I asked if they had letters. The calamity I dreaded flashed across my mind. I talked of it the whole evening to Mme. de La Fayette and others. Their terrified expressions confirmed my suspicions. "You are holding from me to-day what I shall learn to-morrow", I said with extreme emotion. "I know what you wish to keep from me. Adrienne, my cousin, you must tell me the dreadful news."

Early next morning she came into my room. I read the whole story in her face. She did not tell me of the death of both at once. She waited awhile. My grief was inexpressible. . . .

In the midst of the tumult caused by the Revolution of the tenth Thermidor, it was thought that everyone in the prisons would be massacred. Then came the death of Robespierre. The murders of the Revolutionary tri-



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bunal had ceased. "The first thought of my mother," Virginia tells us, "was to send to the Luxembourg. As she always feared to compromise those so dear to her, and whom she believed were still there, she asked Madame de Duras to write the letter for her." Of this incident, Madame de Duras says:

Madame de La Fayette, whose fears I sought in vain to arouse, was always hoping for the best. How could I tell her she no longer had mother, grandmother or sister! At last she became conscious of the embarrassment of those questioned. She asked me the reason. I answered with a flood of tears. It was a sorry service in return for what she had done for me under the same circumstance. She comprehended the death of her mother and grandmother but she could not be persuaded of the death of the angel sister whom she adored. I loved the Vicomtesse de Noailles as a daughter and a friend. She possessed every possible virtue and charm and was the member of my family I most loved and confided in. Mme. de La Fayette's situation was terrible. We were only roused from our stunned condition by misfortunes more recent than our own, and in trying to console them found our griefs more bearable.

"Thank God for having preserved my life, my head, my strength," Madame de La Fayette wrote to her children; "but do not regret to be away from me. God has preserved me from revolting against Him, but for a long time I could not support even the semblance of a human consolation."

The sixteenth of October, 1794, the great gate of Le Plessis opens. Madame de La Fayette and her cousin see the carriage of the two deputies enter. It is to them a strange and pleasant sight, for heretofore, whenever a vehicle had entered the courtyard, it had departed loaded

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with victims. The deputies at once liberate eighty of the lower class.

Madame de La Fayette and Madame de Duras are notified to present themselves at the clerk's office. As they enter, the deputies, Bourdon de l'Oise and Legendre, harshly command: "Let the *ci-devants* leave the room. It is not proper to examine the good *sans culotte* in their presence." They withdraw to the corridor where they wait and wait and wait—three interminable hours—most of the time standing.

What thoughts, hopes, expectations torment their distraught minds! At last Madame de Duras is called. . . .

Madame de La Fayette sees the last prisoner file out to liberty or continued captivity. Now, utterly alone, she continues to stand. No one dares to announce her name to the tribunal bench as they had the others—"the name she was accustomed to hear glorified." Finally she proclaims it and is conducted to the armchair.

The deputies decide that her husband has too evidently betrayed his country for them to pass upon what concerns his wife. Her case must be carried to the Committee of General Security.

"You have not sent your papers to the Committee," objects one. "I know no one who has charge of this Committee. Will you present them?" she asks Legendre.

"You did not speak thus when you were so insolent to your aide-de-camp," he retorts. "*I detest your husband, yourself and your name.*"

Adrienne's old rebellious spirit leaps. The smouldered ashes blaze. Courageously, nobly she faces the demagogue. "I shall always defend my husband, and a name is not a wrong."

Bourdon asks her several direct questions. The firm-

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ness of her replies infuriates Legendre. "Insolent creature," he bellows, "back to your cell."

Up the hundred steps La Fayette had leaped in boyhood she climbs to the mansard, too absorbed in her heart losses to give thought to the prolongation of her captivity. Fervently she repeats, as was her wont when she felt strength waning, the first words of the *Symbols*: "*I believe in God, the Father all powerful.*"

"Hopefulness, that splendid quality" does not desert her. Is it not both the parent and the offspring of her faith? How impervious it renders her to the dullness, the prejudice, the misunderstanding of the visionless! She writes to her children; feigns that the commissioners' trial is for her betterment. Her burning wish is to quit France with them. Soon as she is out of prison, together they will find their father and sail for the El Dorado of their dream—America!

Next day Madame de Duras is liberated. "I bade farewell to Madame de La Fayette, who was destined to remain in prison," she records. "I felt very grateful for the pleasure, which, despite her unfortunate situation, she showed at seeing me released from bondage."



## CHAPTER XXXII

### YOUNG AMERICA STEPS IN

**F**IFTY days, fifty nights behind bolts and bars! Every moment in expectancy of the guillotine! It is Madame de La Fayette's expiation for being born an aristocrat; her penalty for remaining the loyal wife, the uncompromising defender of a founder of the American Republic.

Meanwhile what of the outside world? Is there no individual, no power, no principality to plead her liberation? Incredible so much nobility of mind, virtue, patriotism could be held so long in ignominious captivity, subjected continuously to the severest hardships and to the cruelest indignities!—almost as incredible as the five years' incarceration of the love of her life in the dungeon fortress of Olmütz.

From June 21, 1794, to January 22, 1795, efforts to release her were ceaseless. In the vanguard of the intercessors was America's Minister to France—Gouverneur Morris. The United States, at this time, was the only country of the civilized world with a representative at Paris. Morris warned—unofficially—the Committee of General Security if it killed the wife of La Fayette England would be justified in her slanders of Jacobinism; all enemies of the Republic would rejoice, and America, which held her husband in the highest esteem, would denounce it.

If the warning impressed the master-minds of the Committee it made no change in Madame de La Fayette's

situation. Alone in the mansard she lived on, in the world but not of it; lived with the little testament she had fashioned from a worn Latin psalm book found in Le Plessis. It was the only book in the prison. She did not know Latin, but she had followed the mass so intelligently, so devoutly all her life that she had the text by heart. It was a message to soothe and to strengthen her bruised soul. It rekindled, as she had previously written her children, "the sentiments that I desire for you; also those I ask God to implant in my heart and sometimes have received."

In Le Plessis, she now wrote her testament. Here are characteristic passages:

Lord, you have been my refuge and my strength in the extreme evils which are come to cast me down. You are my God; all the events of my life are in your hands. Come to my help; then I will have no fear even in the midst of the shadow of death. . . . I have always lived and I hope with the grace of my God, to die in the bosom of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church. I declare that it is in the principles of this religion that I have found my support, in its practices my consolation. I have confidence that it will sustain me to the moment of my death. I believe in you, O my God; in all that you have revealed to your Church. I hope in all that you have promised. I place all my confidence in the merits of Jesus Christ and in the price of His blood. I desire to conform my life to His, to unite my sufferings to His sufferings, my death to His death. I hope, my God, to love you above all things and to come by your grace to the happiness of to love you eternally. I accept without reserve the means that your Providence has chosen in order to conduct me to this happy end. . . .

I pardon from the bottom of my heart my enemies—if I have any—my persecutors, whoever they may be, and even the persecutors of the *one* I love. I pray you, my God, to heap good upon them as I pardon them. Lord, in praying you for our persecutors

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as sincerely as your grace inspires me, you will not reject my prayers for the *one* who is dear to me, and you will treat us according to the munificence of your mercy. Have pity upon me, O my God!

I declare I have never ceased to be faithful to my country; that I have never taken part in any intrigue which could trouble it; that my most sincere wishes are for its happiness; that the principles of my attachment are unshakable and no persecution from wherever it may come can alter them. *A model very dear to my heart gives me example of these sentiments. . . .*

It is in the name of Jesus Christ that I ask these graces that I hope for. Full of confidence in your great mercy, I remit these dear children into your hands. . . . It is in you and you alone that I put my hope. Have pity upon me, O my God!

Day or night a step on the stair, a knock at the door chilled her quaking heart; visualized for her the guillotine and the bloody basket into which the heads of mother, grandmother and sister were tossed. . . . She was fully prepared for the death sentence the bleak November day an official summoned her to the prison office. Courageously she went forth to meet—in lieu of the decree—Mrs. James Monroe, the wife of the American Minister. The Monroes reached Paris within a week of the fall of Robespierre. Monroe wrote to Washington's Secretary of State: "The whole country seemed to be liberated from the most pestilent scourge that ever harassed a country."

James Monroe had succeeded Gouverneur Morris as United States Minister to France. Washington had been forced by the Executive Provisory Council of the Republic of France to inform the Senate (May 27, 1794) that he had "seen fit to recall Morris." The Council's dissatisfaction with Morris was well founded. For long the Paris press had charged him "an agent of the aristocrats."



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Early Republican salons, including Madame de Tessé's and the La Fayette's, had frequently warned him he "injured the cause." "Your sentiments are continually quoted against the good party," La Fayette told him while Jefferson was Minister.

Morris, unlike most deposed diplomats, did not ship for home on the first out-going vessel. "He traveled in Europe four years and amassed considerable fortune selling wild American lands to *noblesse emigrée*," says Roosevelt's *Life of Morris*. Money-making, however, did not retard, rather it quickened the ex-diplomat's effort on behalf of the La Fayette's liberation; for, while he peevishly resents, in his diary, the Madame's cold shoulder to his political overtures and his aristocratic leaning, and heartily disapproves of La Fayette's politics, his admiration for the soldier, his affection for the man seemingly remain inviolable. And so, while Mrs. Monroe at the behest of her husband goes in coach and four and a Bertin gown to call upon Madame de La Fayette in Le Plessis, Morris unofficially continues to work for their liberation.

Mrs. Monroe, to quote a contemporary, was a "regal-looking lady," of "elegant accomplishments, charming mind and much dignity of manner."

But more to prison authority than her appearance or accomplishments was the *éclat* of the United States Embassy entourage awaiting her in Le Plessis courtyard. To the Latin mind gone wild it was a pretty gesture, to be promptly dismissed as had been Gouverneur Morris' unofficial warning. But it was not lost upon Madame de La Fayette. Her unconquerable hopefulness rose to meet the gracious American known to the little New York of her girlhood as Elizabeth Kortright, daughter of a Captain of the British Army turned citizen of the

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United States. How good to touch once more a polite world! Heartened by Mrs. Monroe's visit Adrienne tripped back to the mansard.

Of this incident not a word in Monroe's letter of November 7, 1794, to Washington's secretary, Edmond Randolph, nor to Washington on January 3, 1795. Of the many subjects he had brought before the Committee of Public Safety with ill success, Monroe cites to Randolph the liberation of Thomas Paine and Madame de La Fayette. *Quelle combinaison!*

I assured them both of the interest America had in their welfare [writes Monroe], and the President's regard and my pleasure to embrace every opportunity to serve them; at the same time they must be sensible. It would be difficult for me to take any step officially in behalf of either. *Altogether impossible in behalf of Mme. de La Fayette.* This was admitted by her friend [Who? Morris was in Switzerland, Frestel in Auvergne. It must have been Monsieur Beauchet]. He told me her only wish was that I would have her situation in mind and render her informally what services I might be able without compromising the credit of our government [always considerate] I assured him that she might confide in this with certainty; further, in case any extremity was threatened, that I would go beyond that line and do everything in my power, let the consequence be what it might to myself to save her. . . . She still continues, nor do I think it probable she will soon be released. I have assured her that I would supply her with money and whatever she wanted. As yet none has been accepted, though I think she will soon be compelled to avail herself of this recourse.

During those agonizing days, was there a personal word from the Washington whose intercession upon behalf of his "beloved son" Madame de La Fayette had implored—literally upon bended knee—in the frightful

Chavaniac days? Heart-breaking appeal that fell on deaf ears, she thought. No answer to the second letter she wrote on learning he was re-elected President. Had he, like the rest of the world, turned from her beloved? Oh, why hast Thou forsaken me, she might well have cried out from the cross upon which she hung, apparently bereft of all intervention—human or divine. For she had yet to learn how Washington's letters miscarried; how perseveringly the coming Father of the Monroe Doctrine and countless others were working for her release. But, as Morris' diary shrewdly observes of his successor's efforts in defense of American seamen, "Monroe begins to find out that fine words are of little value."

When Adrienne last heard from La Fayette he was at Neisse, confident of speedy liberation. In Le Plessis she knows he was handed over to the Austrians and is in the prison of Olmütz in western Moravia.

Reorganization of the revolutionary prisons followed Robespierre's death. Suspects and accused were separated. Overwhelmed by her griefs, Madame de La Fayette did not seek the change of prison to which she was entitled; but conditions eventually transferred her, first to prison Amandiers, then to Delmas in rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs. In the former she was alone with twenty colonial women. At first, because of her zeal in christianizing and liberating the Negroes, they treated her abominably. But the impression she invariably made soon mollified them and they left the prison professing admiration for the administratress of *La Belle Gabrielle*.

It seemed that her captivity was being prolonged that she might have the homage, if not the understanding, of the inimical and the criminal. For a time she was with the Gouverneur de Saint-Just, proud of his pupil, who had preceded Robespierre to the guillotine. Her



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vis-à-vis at the mess table was the accuser of the tribunal of Orange, "celebrated above all others for its atrocities." They could not believe that this gentle, compassionate, all comprehending soul was the *ci-devant* spouse of the traitor, rotting—as he jolly well deserved, to their thinking—in the fortress dungeon of Olmütz.

Enters now, for the first time, physical disability. How Madame de La Fayette, constitutionally frail and delicate, kept going is one of the miracles of her nerve-racked life. The power of mind over matter, the sovereignty of the will to live and to do were probably never more convincingly realized. The winter of 1794-1795 was uncommonly rigorous. She was always extremely sensitive to the cold. The prisoners ate in a large hall without a fire and there was scarcely any heat in their cells. Everything in Adrienne's froze. But happily during the four months of Delmas, physical ills, discomforts of every sort vanished with the visits of Père Carrichon. He was the holy, courageous priest of the Oratoire, who had shadowed her beloved to the guillotine, gave them absolution and witnessed their end. During the five months of their retention in Hôtel de Noailles up to their imprisonment in the Luxembourg, he was their weekly confessor. With premonition he said: "If you go to the guillotine and God gives me the strength, I will accompany you there." They took him at his word and frequently reminded him of his promise.

"That you may better recognize me," he told them, "I shall wear a dark blue coat, a bright red vest and hat well down over the eyes."

Disguised as a carpenter—he was handy with tools—the faithful Père had now unsuspected access to the Delmas prisoner. In cautiously snatched moments, they relived together the minutiae of the beloved's sacrifice,

until much of the desolating whole was Adrienne's, as vividly as if she had witnessed it.

"I dressed as I promised," he tells her his first day of carpentry in Delmas. "Not finding them in the Palace court, I followed the crowd until I reached the carts rumbling to Place Antoine."

"Then you saw them?"

"From a distance. The Maréchale was in the last cart nearest me. Her eyes were everywhere but she did not see me. Then came the second cart with Madame d'Ayen and Madame de Noailles. The Duchesse wore a blue and white striped negligée. She seemed scarcely forty. The Vicomtesse was in white which she had worn since the execution of her father and mother-in-law. She did not look twenty-four." She was thirty-five. "How angelic she seemed!"

"Six soldiers guarded them. The first two stood off a distance and regarded them with a fond, respectful look that charmed me."

"Yes! Yes!"

"As if they would give them liberty. The Vicomtesse cared for her mother with the tender watchfulness so natural to her."

"*Ma chère Louise!*"

"Some one near me says: 'See the young one! How interested she talks to the other. She is not afraid, not sad.'"

"How could she be—on the way to Paradise!"

"I see the Vicomtesse's eyes searching for me. I seem to hear all they say: 'Mama, he is not there.' . . . 'Look again.' . . . 'Nothing escapes me.' . . . 'I assure you, Mama, he is not there.' . . . The second cart passes. They do not see me. I am ready to give absolution as I had promised. Alas! they do not see me. Madame

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d'Ayen's anxiety is in her face. . . . I stand in a conspicuous place. I am tempted to give up."

"But you didn't, mon Père? You didn't?"

"I have done all I could, I say to myself. Elsewhere the crowd will be greater; there will be no way. I am fatigued. I am turning away. Suddenly the sky darkens. Thunder is heard in the distance. Lightning flashes. 'Hold on yet,' I say."

"And you did? *Dieu soit béni!*"

"A turn of the road brings me—before the carts halt—into rue Saint-Antoine. The wind blows violently. Thunder and lightning terrify. The rain falls in torrents. The curious without shelter seek it. Those under roof shut windows and doors. The funeral cortège abandoned by the world jogs along disorderly in the nearby deserted street. I quit the shop door where I had found shelter. I feel a reborn courage. In the confusion no attention would be paid me. . . . Directly the Vicomtesse sees me. Her eyes lift to heaven with expression of vivid joy."

"*Ma chère angélique Louise!*"

"She seems to say to me smilingly: 'You are here at last. Ah, how content we are! We have searched you everywhere.'

"Her hands like those of her companions are tied behind her back. She leans toward her mother and speaks in her ear: 'See, Mama, le Père is here.' A celestial light illumines Madame d'Ayen's countenance."

"*Ma mère bien aimée!*"

"I drip with rain and sweat. I continue to walk close to the cart. I do not address a word to them but they understand. Nothing holds them to this world but desire to leave it as they had lived in it—humbly, christianly."

"As God willed, mon Père."



"Instantly, my irresolution vanishes. I feel by the grace of God an extraordinary courage."

"Their prayers answered."

"I continue to walk near them. The storm rages; the wind is a hurricane. The ladies in the first cart are terror-stricken. The Maréchale is beside herself."

"*Pauvre grandmère!*"

"Her big bonnet turns inside out and shows her white hair. Her black taffeta gown flaps like a wet rag. She rocks painfully on the hard board seat without a back, her hands tied behind her. . . . The heavens are pitch dark; the rain heavier. At the crossroad which precedes the faubourg Saint-Antoine, I go before. I examine. I say to myself: 'This is the best place.' I detach myself from the cortège. I stop and turn towards them. I sign to the Vicomtesse. She understands perfectly: 'Mama, he is come to give us absolution.' The Duchesse bows her head with a contrition, tenderness and hope that transports me. I raise and extend my hand. I stand with uncovered head and pronounce distinctly the entire formula of the absolution and the words which follow it, with a supernatural exaltation."

Dry-eyed, speechless, Adrienne hangs on his words.

"Mon enfant, it was picture worthy the brush of Raphael."

"Worthy heaven, mon Père."

"The whole was to accompaniment of appalling thunder and lightning. It seemed the storm had been sent to facilitate the mystery."

"It was! It was! *Le Dieu soit béni.*"

"For no sooner were the words said than the rain ceased. The dispersed people again surround the carts and insult the hapless victims with ribald jests."

"And then?"

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"We reach the fatal place—the Barrier du Trône."

Père Carrichon hesitates. With sweep of swallow's wing the fatal day passes before him. He sees the old Maréchale bravely mount the sacrificial altar—the third of the group. To reach her neck, the high executioner is obliged to tear open her bodice while the inhuman crowd cheers. The Duchesse is the tenth and her delight to precede her daughter transfigures her. The executioner snatches off her bonnet. It's held by a pin. Her face twitches with pain. Her head in the bloody basket, her tender daughter replaces her and likewise winces when her bonnet is wrenched off. The père wonders anew how he lived through it, but he had promised and it was for him to drink the chalice to the dregs.

"Go on, mon Père," pleads Adrienne. "You're keeping something from me." He resolves to write her later—and he did—what he cannot voice.

"The guillotine towers, the carts stop," he resumes, avoiding the great asking eyes riveted upon him. "Cavalry and foot soldiers surround them. Beyond is the dense crowd. I see the executioner and his two valets, one remarkable for his great height, the other for the *sang-froid* with which he moves and the rose he carries in his mouth. The Vicomtesse' eyes search until they find me. During that first ravishing picture they said nothing to me—now raised to heaven, now lowered to earth. Those glances so sweet, so expressive, so heavenly! Now they are often directed to me. I pull down my hat without losing sight of her. I hear her say to me, 'Our sacrifice is made. What dear ones we leave! But God in His mercy calls us. We will not forget them and our thanks to you. We will see each other again in heaven. Adieu. . . .' I do not feel more; I am by this time torn, moved, consoled."

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"As I am," said Adrienne, terror, grief, regret lost in the saintly resignation with which the beloved met their fate.

"It is their prayers, their intercession, mon cher Père, that will reunite me with my children and their father."



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### DRAMATIC UNITIES VIOLATED

**I**RRESPECTIVE of the victims' heavenly intercession, no earthly effort was neglected to liberate Madame de La Fayette. Minister Monroe never lost sight of her plight. Repeatedly Madame Beauchet, her former chambermaid, went to the home of Citizen Colombel, La Fayette's one-time aide-de-camp. Always he found pretext for a new delay. At length the Committee was favorably disposed—all except Legendre. Persistently, he withheld his signature, which was imperative to securing her release.

It seems a violation of dramatic unities, if not poetic injustice, that it was not given the United States to liberate its "uncompromising champion." The honor and the joy were for plucky Madame de Duras. Relentlessly, just as the British Ambassador would have us believe, she wearied the Queen of Spain to acquiescence in interest of the Franco-Spanish alliance, Madame de Duras dogged the footsteps of Legendre. A winter night she surprised him at his toilet. With face submerged in lather the despot was unable to escape or to silence her. She recalled her grateful obligation to him for her own liberty.

"Citoyen, Madame de La Fayette has suffered as much as I have for being born an aristocrat." [She might have truthfully added "ten thousand times more."] "She has the same right to the liberty you have given me."

How his ego must have swelled! Proceeding with his

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toilet, he promised no longer to oppose, and January 22, 1795, he signed the *acte de liberté* that freed her.

Dazed, bewildered, alone, Adrienne stumbled into the wintry sunshine of a metamorphosed Paris. Direct as steel to magnate, she picked her way afoot—she had not the price of a fiacre—to the United States Embassy. She would thank Minister Monroe for all he had done for her. The gallant Virginian of “small chin, small shrewd blue eyes and crown of crisp powdered hair” had the surprise of his political career. He had thought her case beyond human intervention. He was about to write officially to that effect to his Government when she stood before him. Her great eyes in an unearthly white face glowed like torches in an alabaster lamp.

“You will complete your merciful work in my behalf,” she pleaded, “with a passport for myself and family.” Never had she regarded herself separable from the children. Together they would now recover their father.

Monroe’s letter to President Washington, written about this time (January, 1795), reveals the tardiness of communication, official and otherwise, and, from the vantage of present day facilities, increases the wonder how any measure survived those perilous times. Incidentally, the letter discloses not only the delay and uncertainty of mail transportation but the incorrectness of not a few of the Minister’s statements.

Washington’s letter, to which the following was the Minister’s reply, was seven months en route from Philadelphia to Paris:

Your favor of June 5th [1794] did not reach me until a few days past. I am able to give you details of the lady in question which will be very agreeable to you. I had advanced her nearly two thousand dollars when Jacob Van Staphorst advised me that

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you had placed in his brother's hands for Mme. de La Fayette the sum of two thousand three hundred and ten guilders which had *never been received*. At this time she was soliciting permission to leave France with a view of *visiting* and partaking with her husband the fortune to which he was exposed. I had given her a certificate that her husband had lands in America and that the Congress had appropriated to his use upwards of \$20,000, the amount that was due his services in our revolution, upon which basis her application was founded and granted. [La Fayette offered his services gratuitously and up to this never had pay of any sort.]

I made known to her the fund you had appropriated for her use and which she readily and with pleasure accepted and which served to defray the expense of her journey. She pursued her route by Dunkirk and Hamburg, to which places I gave and procured letters of recommendation. At Hamburg she was received in the home and entertained by our consul, Mr. Coffyn. [Incorrect] I assured her, when she left France, there was no service within my power to render her, her children, her husband and family that I would not with pleasure render them; to count upon my utmost efforts and commend them in their favor. That it was *your wish and the wish of America that I should do so*. To consult her husband as to the mode and measure and apprise me of his opinion thereon "she departed, grateful to you"—(can you not see her, hear her?)—and our country. Since which I have not heard from her. She thought of visiting in person the Emperor [Austria] and endeavoring to obtain the release of her husband. Whether she did or not I cannot tell. It was reported, some time since, he was released; afterwards that she was admitted with her family into the same state of confinement with him, the latter of which I believe to be true. . . . Before she left here I became responsible in her favor for \$9000.00 upon a month's notice (in specie), the object of which was to free a considerable estate from some encumbrances and which was effected upon my surety. *As yet I have not been called upon to pay it*. As soon as I received the draft on Holland for \$6000 on her behalf, I wrote her by *two different routes* to assure her I had funds for her and her husband's support upon which she might for the present draw to the amount



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of 250 pds sterling and afterwards as occasion might require. *I have received no answer.* What may be the ultimate disposition of France towards *Mr. La Fayette* it is impossible now to say. His integrity remains unimpeached, and when that is the case the errors of the head are pardoned as passions subside. It is more than probable I may be able to serve him with those by whom he is confined and that I may do this without injury here to the United States; acting with candor and avowing my motive, since it is impossible that notice can be otherwise than approved, especially if the step be taken when their [France or America?] affairs are in great prosperity. For this, however, I shall be happy to have your approbation, since if I do anything with the Emperor it must be done in your name, if not explicitly yet in a manner to make known to him the interest you take in the welfare of *Mr. La Fayette*.

Young *La Fayette* is, I presume, now under your auspices.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### AWAITING PASSPORT

A PASSPORT, then as now, was a leisurely red-tape performance. In this instance it took Minister Monroe a seemingly interminable time to cut the Gordian knot and deliver the coveted pasteboard to Madame de La Fayette, known henceforth to the traveling public as Mrs. Motier, Hartford, Connecticut, U. S. A. In "far off happier day," Connecticut's capital had given the Marquis de La Fayette naturalization.

While waiting on the Minister's diplomacy, Adrienne was the shrewd woman of affairs. Paris was in a bewildering chaotic state, and what she accomplished those days of anxious waiting reveals an acumen and a dispatch smacking more of this day's efficiency than eighteenth century dalliance.

On quitting the United States Embassy, her first move was to find her son and provide for his future. She could not leave the boy in France nor bring him to Germany, where he would be in the midst of his father's enemies. Undaunted by previous failures, she decided herself to send him to America.

The Ségurs had found a retreat at Chitney, a few miles from Paris. Thither she went to find what she had given up hope of ever retrieving "my almost dead life reanimated with a great and tender interest."

The Comtesse de Ségur was her mother's half-sister and the wife of La Fayette's boyhood chum, the Comte Philippe de Ségur of gallant service in American wars.

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The Comte's tribute to his niece in his well-known *Memoirs* remain unchallenged: "Severe to herself, indulgent to others, she counts among the very few whose pure names gain a fresh glory from the tragedy of the Revolution. Ruined by its storms, she hardly seemed to remember that she had once enjoyed a great fortune. . . . She was the happiness of her family, the staff of the poor, the consolation of her country and the honor of her sex."

In the peace and calm that her lovely aunt radiated, Adrienne found strength, and the sixth day of freedom she summoned George from Chavaniac. Considerate as ever of compromising her hosts, mother and son met in the house of two old Jansenist spinsters at Chilty, a hamlet near Chatenay. Sight of the boy, now fourteen years old, brought a joy she had thought herself never again capable of feeling.

"I felt," Adrienne told her daughters long after, "a consolation so profound, a feeling so strong and so far beyond my hopes that nothing better perhaps can possibly await me."

She felt sure it was to America La Fayette would wish the boy to be sent. That was enough! She did not hesitate to make the sacrifice.

Comte de Ségur introduced her to Monsieur Boissy d'Anglas, an influential member of the new Committee of Safety, engaged in repairing past evils. He secured the boy's passport, as had Minister Monroe his mother's, under the name of Motier, Hartford, Connecticut. Boissy d'Anglas' colleagues signed it without knowing to whom the boy was destined. A passport was also given Monsieur Frestel, but, to avoid suspicion, pupil and tutor sailed on different vessels. George shipped from Havre on a little craft whose captain or crew knew



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not his name or of his consignment to Mr. Russell of Boston.

Madame de La Fayette decided he should await there in the house of Mr. Russell's father the arrival of Monsieur Frestel, when they would journey together to General Washington's Mount Vernon home. Here is the mother's letter which the boy's tutor carried to Washington:

Monsieur: I send you my son. Although I have not had the consolation to make myself heard and to obtain from you the kind of service that I believe proper to deliver his father from the hands of our enemies because your views were different from mine, my confidence is not altered, and it is with profound and sincere feeling that I put this dear child under the protection of the United States. He is accustomed, for some time, to regard it his second country. I have for long since regarded it our asylum and under the particular protection of its president, of whose feeling for his father I well know.

He who brings this letter, Monsieur, has been since our misfortune, our support, our resource, our consolation, and my son's guide. I desire that he shall not cease to be it, and that until his arrival my son remain obscure in Mr. Russel's house until their reunion; that he never be separated from him, and that we may have the happiness of reunion some day in the land of the free.

It is to the generous care of this friend that their mother owes her life. He went, despite every peril, to expose to M. Morris my horrible situation; and after the courage to cross all France in that moment of horror and to devotedly follow the prisoner doomed to death, to obtain from the United States Minister the process which probably deferred my sacrifice, and which made me await the revolution of the 10th thermidor.

He will say to you that I have never given pretext for any accusation, that my country has never had anything to reproach me with. And I will tell you that it is near him and with him that my son learned without cease and in the depths of evil to distin-

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guish liberty from the horrors to which one has dared to mix its name.

In receiving from him each day example of the most generous virtue, he modeled himself to this generosity which has conserved, and will always conserve, in his heart, I hope, love of a country where victims so dear have been immolated; where his mother has been sixteen months in prison. The crown of the sacrifice this friend makes to-day is to separate himself from a family he tenderly cherishes.

It is the need of my heart to make known to M. Washington what he is, and our indebtedness to him. A single letter illy fulfills this object. When can I myself fulfill it?

It is my wish that my son lead a very obscure life in America; that he renew the studies three years of misfortune have interrupted, and that away from places that might too strongly dishearten or fire his soul with indignation, he can work and make himself capable of fulfilling the duties of a citizen of the United States, of which the sentiments and the principles will always be in accord with those of a French citizen.

I will tell you nothing of my position to-day, nor of that which interests me much more than my own. I will leave it to the friend who will present this letter to be the interpreter of the sentiments of my heart too withered [*flétri*] to express other than my gratitude. I owe very much to M. Monroe and MM. Skypwith and Montflorenc [United States Consuls in France] for the good will and service they have rendered me.

I beg you, M. Washington, to accept with kindness the homage of my confidence, my respect and my devotion.

NOAILLES LA FAYETTE

With George on the high seas, she set out for Auvergne. Every milestone was a reawakened torture. At charming Vayre, three miles from Clermont, where two years before, in its obscure inn, she had secretly met sister Pauline, the children awaited her. What a reunion! All had given up hope of ever seeing each other again.

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The next day was Sunday. In some places services were beginning to be held. They walked to Montout, a hamlet buried in the mountains, where they heard mass. Then they turned to Chavaniac, still some miles off.

Adrienne's zeal to find La Fayette was so ardent that, despite the grief at parting from Aunt Charlotte, leaving her alone after the years of sorrow she had passed, the trio were en route to Paris before the expiration of the time allotted to Chavaniac.

At Brioude, where the square its famous Cathedral confronts is known to-day as *Place La Fayette*, the happy travelers came face to face with the Grammonts. From Franche-Comte, Rosalie and her husband, the Marquis de Grammont, had gone on foot to Paris in search of her sister. Failing to find her there, they were continuing afoot through Auvergne to Chavaniac—four hundred miles! They had no money to travel by carriage, and, to avoid the terrorists that one risked encountering in public conveyances, they had walked the entire distance.

After such irrevocable losses the reunion was no little consolation. Together the five continued the journey, partly on foot, partly in the cabriolet Madame de La Fayette had hired.

Paris, they learned, was too upset by the prairial event (May 21st to June 12th) to transact business of any kind. Madame de La Fayette decided, if the Jacobins prevailed, to emigrate so she would have nothing with which to reproach herself regarding the preservation of the property that remained to her. Three weeks they awaited at Clermont the outcome of the Jacobin struggle for dominance. The delay was not lost upon Adrienne. She prepared Virginia for her First Communion, which took place in the ancient church in which her mother had



given thanks for escape from the first call to Paris imprisonment.

The glory Monsieur Boissy d'Anglas had acquired in preserving France from return of the Terror gave him a power which the Comte de Ségur employed to his niece's advantage. "But it was an interminable time," writes Virginia, "before the passport was received."

In the interval the woman of tears was lost in the woman of affairs. The decree which restored to the heirs of the guillotine their property was in force. Madame de La Fayette obtained, in part, her share and that of the co-heirs of the Duchesse d'Ayen's estates in Brie. She personally executed every detail of her mother's will to the distribution of her many charitable bequests. For Aunt Charlotte she effected repurchase of Château Chavaniac from the original purchaser, the furniture and family portraits. To this went the money advanced by Minister Monroe of which he wrote Washington. Monsieur de Grammont sold half his wife's diamonds to make up the amount the loan failed to cover.

These intricate affairs and solicitude over the passport delay kept her continuously on the road—ordinarily walking—between Fontenay and Paris. Her health, heretofore so delicate, was seemingly inexhaustible as was her activity. In the oratoires which the immolated victims had so often edified with their piety, and in the devastated churches in Paris and along the country-side that had begun to open, her sorely tried faith found unfailing consolation. Perhaps it was at this time—free from social duties and cut off from old ties—she practised most assiduously the piety to which her inner life was ever given and found in tears a soothing relief.

At Brie she lodged in the convent the Maréchale de Noailles had established at the gate of La Grange estate.

## AWAITING PASSPORT

The nuns were still there in hiding, and their hospitality heartened her for the days ahead. At last the passport came. It was for America, as French were forbidden Austrian soil. Obviously Boissy d'Anglas and Minister Monroe had worked together understandingly in overcoming bureaucrat objection. . . .

At dawn the fifth of September, 1795, a dinky little American vessel put out from Dunkirk for Hamburg. Curled up in its cabin were the Hartford, Connecticut, Motiers, three as happy mortals as ever set sail on an unknown sea to an unknown port. Were they not on the trail of Heart's Desire?

As the vessel tossed over the Baltic, they visualized George and Frestel with Washington and his Martha in the Mount Vernon home. La Fayette had so familiarized them with the lovely colonial mansion that they followed, mentally, the boy and his tutor from rising bell to night prayers.

Alas for George, Frestel and the President of the United States! They were having their own troubles. Washington was on the point of setting out for Virginia to bring back his family from Mount Vernon to Philadelphia when Adrienne's letter reached him. The fugitives, safely arrived at Boston, had enclosed it with their own, and were anxiously awaiting there Washington's summons. Adrienne's letter touched him deeply.

She had not received his replies to her heart-breaking appeals from Chavaniac; nor the 200 guilders he had put to her credit in the Amsterdam bank! He was profoundly disturbed. Where were his letters? Who had them? Washington enclosed Adrienne, George and Frestal's letters—within an hour of their receipt—to Mr. George Cabot, Boston, with this illuminating epistle:

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

*(Private and confidential)*

Phil., 7 Sept. 1795

DEAR SIR:

The enclosed letters—after reading be so good as to return to me,—will be the best apology I can offer for the liberty I am about to take, and for the trouble, which if you comply with my request, it must necessarily give.

To express all the sensibility which has been excited in my breast by the receipt of young La Fayette's letter, from the recollections of his father's merits, services and sufferings, from my friendship for him, and from my wishes to become a friend and father to his son is unnecessary. Let me in a few words declare that I will be his friend; but the manner of becoming so, considering the obnoxious light in which his father is viewed by the French Government, and in my own situation as the President of the United States, requires more time to consider in all its relations than I can bestow on it at present, the letters not having been in my hands more than an hour and I myself on the point of setting out for Virginia to fetch my family back, whom I left there about the first of August.

The mode which at the first view strikes as the most eligible to answer his purpose and to save appearances is, first to administer all the consolation to the young gentleman that he can desire from the most unequivocal assurance of my standing in the place of and becoming to him a father, friend, protector and supporter. But secondly, for prudential motives, as they may relate to himself, his mother and friends, whom he has left behind, and to my official character, it would be best not to make these sentiments public; and of course it would be ineligible that he should come to the seat of the General Government, where all the foreign characters (particularly that of his own nation) are residents, until it is seen what opinions will be excited by his arrival; especially, too, as I shall be necessarily five or six weeks from it on business in several places.

Thirdly, considering how important it is to avoid idleness and dissipation, to improve his mind, and to give him all the advantages which education can bestow, my opinion and advice to him are, if he is qualified for admission, that he should enter as a



## AWAITING PASSPORT

student at the University in Cambridge (Harvard), although it should be for a short time only; the expense of which as also every other means for his support I will pay.

And I now authorize you, my dear Sir, to draw upon me accordingly. If it is in any degree necessary or desired that M. Frestel, his tutor, should accompany him to the University in that character, any arrangements which you shall make for the purpose, and any expense thereby incurred for the same, shall be borne by me in like manner.

One thing more, and I will conclude. Let me pray you, my dear Sir, to impress upon young La Fayette's mind, and indeed upon that of his tutor, that the reasons why I do not urge him to come to me have been frankly related, and that their prudence must appreciate them with caution. My friendship for his father, so far from being diminished, has increased in the ratio of his misfortunes; and my inclination to serve the son will be evidenced by my conduct.

Reasons which will readily occur to you, and which can be easily explained to him, will account for my not acknowledging the receipt of his or M. Frestel's letter.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

The disposition of the boy was to Washington a delicate matter.

"I am distrustful of my own judgment," he wrote Hamilton, "in deciding on this business lest my feelings should carry me further than prudence (while I am a public character) will warrant."

His first impulse before writing Cabot was to take George and Frestel into his own family. He realized it was what they and Madame de La Fayette expected him to do.

More than two months later (November 18th), he wrote to Alexander Hamilton, enclosing the letters Cabot had returned:

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

It would be most agreeable to the young gentleman, and congenial with friendship to have him in my home. At the same time it would have given me more command over him, been more convenient and less expensive to myself than to board him out. But now, as I have intimated before, I confide the matter entirely to your decision, after seeing and conversing with them. . . .

P.S. I have no doubt but that young La Fayette and his tutor might be boarded at German Town—or in the vicinity of this City and I would be at hand to give assistance and advice as occasion might require, although he might not be a resident under my roof.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Washington's sensitivity to the boy's situation is summed up in his stress to Hamilton of the necessity of giving him "every assurance and consolation; as there can be no doubt that the feelings of both are alive to everything which may have the semblance of neglect or slight;—and indeed expectant, as they must have been (without perhaps adverting to the impediments) of an invitation to fly to me without delay."

Much parley, much letter-writing (expressage paid by Washington), many détours ensued before George and Frestel were finally under Washington's own vine and fig tree. But of all this, the happy voyagers on the little American boat were not to know until long, long after, when skies were clearer, hearts happier. After eight days of sea churning, they set foot on the shore of the Baltic and found themselves in the bustling commercial town of Altona, near Hamburg.

Madame de Montagu (Pauline), after precarious life in England and Switzerland, was living near Altona with her aunt, the indomitable and irrepressible Comtesse de Tessé. The Comtesse was still the radical reformer; read romances as of old but was far from romantic.

## AWAITING PASSPORT

Fleeing early in the Revolution from Paris with a goodly lot of negotiable securities, the Comtesse had bought a farm at Lowenberg, conducted it profitably, sold dairy products to the countryside, then disposed of the property to advantage. At Altona she now tarried and was on the outlook for a larger estate. Meanwhile her salon was the mecca of *émigrés* that drank her tea and reviled the leaders of the Revolution, as they had insulted Marie Antoinette. Great hearted, eccentric Aunt de Tessé was always the La Fayette's mainstay. She had just heard from the Princesse d'Hénin, the General's English correspondent—his feminine correspondents were legion—that Madame de La Fayette was en route to Altona.

The letter was scarcely read when boom of cannon announced the arrival of a vessel. "Adrienne!" cried Pauline. "What brings her to Altona?"

"Fleeing from some new persecution?" suggested Aunt de Tessé.

Before they could get to the harbor, Madame de La Fayette and the girls stood before them.

"All that Adrienne had suffered was in her countenance," says Madame de Montagu's journal. "Her features were greatly changed, but beneath every devastating imprint was a surprising calm, an air of resolution that was impressive." Grief had sublimated her into what seemed a disembodied spirit.

The sisters had not seen each other since the fall of 1791, in the inn at Vayre. They could not speak for emotion. Aunt de Tessé withdrew with Anastasie and Virginia, and they were left alone. Each knew the other's thoughts, and were loath to speak. It was Madame de Montagu who broke the silence. "Did you see them?" she sobbed. "I had not that happiness," replied the calm Adrienne. But she had talked with Monsieur Grelet,



the tutor of Louise's children, and had lived through their sacrifice with Père Carrichon.

So in a short while Adrienne was able to impart the whole tragic story to Pauline, and give her a copy of her mother's will, which she had made for her. Before leaving the Conciergerie, the Duchesse d'Ayen gave her inseparable companion, the *Imitation de Jésus-Christ*, to a fellow prisoner, the Duchesse d'Orléans, the widow of Philippe Egalité, guillotined the previous year.

"If you survive me," she said, "give this book to my children." At mention of their names her calm dissolved into tears, which the open page—"The Royal Way of the Cross"—caught and retained. The fall of Robespierre saved the Princesse's head, and she had delivered the volume to Adrienne.

Aside from Madame de Montagu, the household of Madame de Tessé included her husband, the Comte, for long First Equerry to Louis XVI; her cavalier, the Comte de Mun and his gay son the Marquis. Breathlessly they waited Madame de La Fayette's recital of her Paris imprisonments. Reluctantly, hesitatingly, she recalled the past, reserving to the end her purpose in coming to Altona.

"She said as if it were the most natural thing in the world," writes Madame de Montagu, "that she was going to rejoin her husband in Olmütz. 'I am on my way to Vienna,' she said. 'I shall throw myself with my daughters at the feet of the Emperor, not to ask his favor for my husband—one asks favors for the culpable—not to ask even justice—it cannot be had—I shall ask only to be shut up with him in fortress Olmütz.'"

Her auditors were dumb with amazement. They admired the sentiment that prompted the resolution, but strenuously objected to its execution. They pictured the

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difficulties of the undertaking; the rebuffs that awaited her at Vienna; the dangers, if she succeeded, to her health, already undermined by prison life. The want of fresh air and outdoor exercise, so essential to her growing daughters they urged, would be fatal to them. All that reason, friendship and love could summon were voiced long and loud to turn her from her heroic resolve.

She had foreseen every objection. To each she responded gently and conclusively while enraptured Pauline pressed her passionately to her heart. Her resolution was irrevocable.

Hamburg and Altona swarmed with *émigrés*. In large numbers they flocked to the Comtesse's salon to see Madame de La Fayette. To several she gave news of their families; to those who came through the curiosity every person from France excited, she gave information. Their conduct towards La Fayette, which would have engendered bitterness in a lesser soul, apparently did not affect her. Adrienne disclosed not the least trace of resentment. Her daughters looked on amazed. Theirs was the resentfulness of high-spirited youth. Incapable as yet of just evaluations, they were for showing the intruders the door.

"It's unheard of," bursts forth Virginia, "to love with so great an exaltation without feeling under any circumstances a shade of bitterness against those who calumniated and persecuted the object of all one's affections. . . . She appraised the conduct of those of whom there was the most to censure with an indulgent justice, and in the whole course of her troubled life this disposition never altered."

The stop at Altona was brief. To shorten the journey to Vienna, Adrienne bought a carriage and four horses. She engaged as domestic, interpreter and guide a German

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girl who spoke a little French, and knew the road. Another passport was imperative. The United States Consul at Hamburg secured it under the same name as the previous—Mrs. Motier, Hartford, Connecticut.

With the Aladdin permit secured, she did not yield for a day nor an hour to the entreaty of Aunt de Tessé to give it up and remain at Altona. Off she went with the equally impatient daughters, leaving all who had seen and heard in admiration of her "gentleness, courage, foresight and dispatch."



## CHAPTER XXXV

### WHEN SOVEREIGN HANDS ARE TIED

**M**ISCHIEVOUS Brownies kept pace with the travelers. Their elfish pranks riled the surly driver, tickled the fat fraülein and was for the girls continuous giggle and laughter. The roads at times were perilous passing. Not infrequently it was "All passengers out," and everyone gave a lift to the extraction of wheel, horse or driver from the too, too tenacious mud. No sooner was the feat achieved than the "lead" was liable to balk. His companions invariably struck in sympathy, and, scornful of coaxing whip, refused to budge until, like a modern walking delegate, the "lead" signalled.

The carriage was built for carnival rather than for hard going. Outside the fortifications of Vienna, it fell to pieces and was abandoned. But the dauntless travelers were only enlivened by the mishaps. With first sight of the old Austrian capital, walled with ancient battlements long since demolished to the enlargement and beautification of the Vienna of to-day, every discomfort of the road vanished. As most Parisians of the period they were untraveled, but from familiar pictures they recognized the Hofburg—the Imperial Palace, a "huge complex of various epochs in divers style of architecture, enclosing many courtyards." Above wall and battlements they glimpsed Saint Stephen's Cathedral. It harked back to the Crusades; towered and dominated Vienna as it does to this day.

Madame de La Fayette had a letter of introduction to

the Comtesse de Reimbeck, a sister of Monsieur de Cobentzel—"excellent and amiable person." The Comtesse received her with hospitable graciousness. Following her diplomat brother's advice, Madame de La Fayette presented herself, with Anastasie and Virginia, to old Prince de Rosemberg, the Grand Chamberlain of the Imperial Palace. It was the Palace to which her uncle, the Marquis de Noailles, was the French Ambassador, when La Fayette returned from his triumphant visit to General Washington, and was presented to the Emperor Joseph II. Adrienne was in the Grand Chamberlain's presence before she recognized in him a favorite guest of the Duc d'Ayen at Hôtel de Noailles. Her first impulse was to recall to him how often they had broken bread at the same board, then she remembered that she had been introduced as Mrs. Motier, Hartford, Connecticut, U. S. A.

Touched by her plight and the nobility of her approach, the gallant old Prince, apprised at last of her identity, brought her direct to the Emperor, Francis II. He was the son of the Leopold II who had succeeded Emperor Joseph II, Marie Antoinette's brother, to the Austrian throne.

"Your Majesty, I ask only the favor of sharing my husband's prison," said Mrs. Motier, standing forth in her true colors.

"I grant it," said the Emperor. "As for his liberty, that is impossible. My hands are tied." Tactlessly, he extended his hands crossed after the manner of the handcuffed—gesture to her poignantly familiar!

Having expressed gratitude with characteristic vivacity, she added that the wives of her husband's companions shut up with him in Olmütz would envy her happiness.

"They have only to do as you have done," said the

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Emperor. "I will do the same for them." But it was for her alone to seek the self-sacrificing immolation.

"I know, Sire, several vexatious things in usage in Prussian prisons," she interjected. "May I be permitted to address you directly any request I may have to make?"

"I consent," he said. "But you will find Monsieur de La Fayette well nourished, well treated. I hope you will render me that justice. Your presence will be my greatest approbation. As for the rest, you will be content with the Commander. Prisoners are known only by numbers, but your husband is well known by his name."

Had he conferred upon Citoyenne Motier the Kingdom of a Sheba she could not have left His Majesty's presence more joyously elated.

Eight days more of Vienna went to translating the Emperor's permission into a working fact. In the interval she saw her dearest friend outside her family, the Comtesse de La Marck. But she reproved herself for the slightest social indulgence; any happiness outside work for the liberation of La Fayette was to her an unpardonable dereliction.

The master manipulator of the Imperial Court was Baron de Thugut. She thought it well, before quitting Vienna, to see him. It was the time of the exchange of the Princess of France—Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême—the daughter of Marie Antoinette—with the deputed conventional prisoners, including Lemeth.

Madame de La Fayette did not wish to speak against the unseemliness of retaining captive him who had been proscribed for having defended Louis XVI, while those who had voted his death were delivered. It was not for her to say an unfavorable word of a prisoner, even when the prisoner was the Duchesse d'Angoulême, who inherited her mother's hatred of La Fayette, the one man



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who might have saved the royal heads and preserved the monarchy, had the Queen been less obdurate.

Baron de Thugut—wily as a serpent—received Mrs. Motier with constrained politeness. His expression showed his hate for her husband. He made no effort to dissemble it. She felt, on quitting him, doubly grateful to Prince de Rosemberg for having put her in direct touch with the Emperor without the intervention of this sinister Minister. The interview convinced her that it would be a long time before La Fayette would be liberated.

It was Monsieur de Ferraris, War Minister, who finally delivered the Emperor's official permission to enter the prison.

"Madame, I beg you reflect well upon what you are about to do," he pleaded. "I warn you that it will be very bad for you. The régime to which you will be subjected will have grave consequences, both for you and your daughters."

Madame de La Fayette listened as she had to the Altona objectors, and undaunted took to the road.

In one of the uncovered vehicles met on all post-roads they arrived next morning (October 1, 1795) at eleven o'clock, at Olmütz. "I will never forget the moment the postilion pointed out to us in the distance the towers of the city," writes Virginia. "My mother's emotion is before me. Suffocated for a time by tears, when she recovered sufficiently to speak she blessed God in the words of the Canticle of Tobias:

Lord, you are great in eternity and your reign extends throughout all the centuries. You chastise and you save. You conduct men to the edge of the tomb and you lead them back from it; nothing can withstand your power. Render thanks to the Lord.

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children of Israel, and praise him before nations, because he has scattered you among people who do not know Him, to the end that you may publish His wonders and that you may teach them that there is nothing the all-powerful God may not do.

It is He who has chastised us because of our iniquities and who will save in order to signalize His mercy. Consider then the manner in which He has treated us and bless Him with fear and trembling.

Render homage by your works to the King of all the centuries.

They stopped at the home of the Commander of the town. He had been instructed not to see Madame de La Fayette and he obeyed. He sent for the prison guard to conduct her to the fortress.

"I do not know," she wrote at the close of this day, which she declared the happiest of her life, "how I can support all I feel."

La Fayette had not been told of their arrival. Adrienne's letter had not reached him. Before the guard's huge brass key grated his door lock, they burst upon him like apparitions from another world. The girls fell back affrighted. "His appearance was terrifying."

Madame de La Fayette was profoundly moved by the change, but nothing could dim the intoxication of her joy after the bitterness of their separation and her irreparable losses. Three years of captivity, the last spent in solitary confinement—penalty for attempting to escape with the connivance of Monsieur Bollman, an unknown Hanoverian, and young Hüger, an American citizen, son of the first friend La Fayette made on American soil—had so profoundly affected his health that there was scarcely a trace of the dashing conqueror of Cornwallis.

Ominous silence followed the first happy moment of the tragic reunion. The prisoner did not dare to break it. He knew there had been a Terror in France but he

did not know the names of the victims. It was not until the girls were locked up for the night in the grim chamber next to the prisoner's cell that La Fayette had courage to ask and Adrienne strength to tell how the guillotine had wiped out her mother, grandmother and sister. . . .

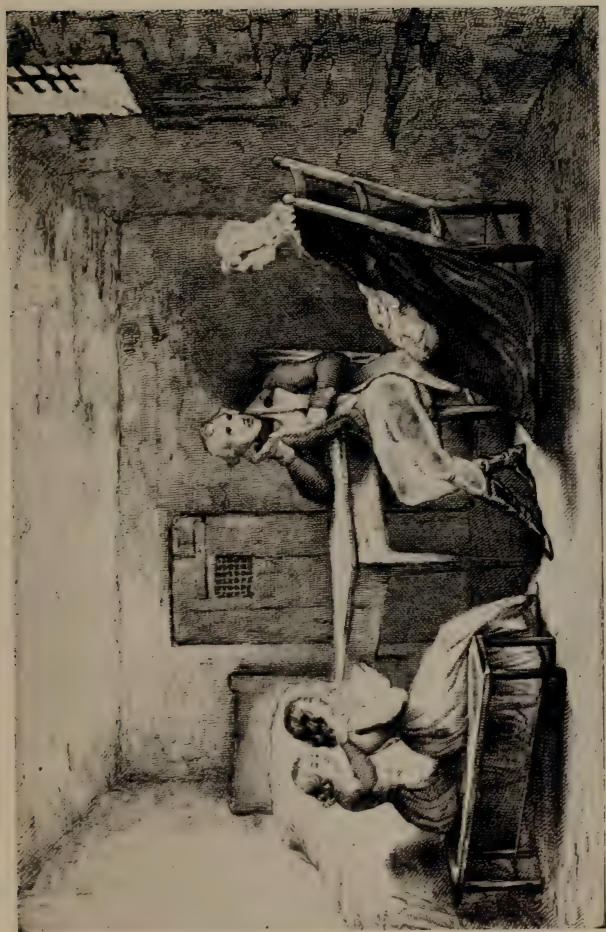
On entering the prison their purses were taken from them. The packets of Paris and Altona purchases were rifled. Three silver spoons were removed and never replaced. They ate with their fingers, as La Fayette said, "like North American Indians," and we can well believe often they longed for the redman's tomahawk!

All communication with *Monsieurs de Maubourg* and *de Pusy*, "who never wished their cause to be separated from La Fayette's" had long since been cut off; intercourse with the outside world wholly forbidden. The doors of their cells opened only to the daily round of the prison official or the servant who brought the "disgusting meals," for which they paid. A domestic to care for their ménage—unlike every prison *Madame de La Fayette* had known—was refused; all her reasonable requests were ignored. She was told—rightly it must be admitted—that in accepting imprisonment she agreed to comply with its impositions. But she expected to find conditions as the Emperor had believed they were; for little did his Majesty know of his minister's legerdemain.

*Madame de La Fayette's* letter of May 10, 1796 to *Madame de Tessé*, written four months after her imprisonment, is graphic picture of the true situation. *Madame de Montagu* was so upset by the horrors it depicted that she forwarded from Ploen, Holstein, November 27, 1796, a summary to *Gouverneur Morris*, then tarrying in the Austrian capital.

The summary runs:





LA FAYETTE AND HIS FAMILY IN THE PRISON OF OLMÜTZ  
FROM THE ENGRAVING BY ARY SCHEFFER IN THE PRINT COLLECTION OF THE  
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



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She found M. de La Fayette with two little cells, each furnished with an uncurtained cot, two pine tables, two straight chairs, a portmanteau, a stove lighted from the outside when the body-guard wanted heat; no communication with the outside; no religious assistance, not even mass when it was said in a chapel beside the prison wall; no servant, man or woman; obliged to serve himself in every thing; one tin spoon for eating everything; no knife or fork, ink, pen or paper, and when at long intervals they were brought to him he had to write open letters under the eyes of an officer; very few books.

From the original to Madame de Tessé we quote:

To end these details more gaily [concludes Madame de La Fayette's long letter] I will say to you that the Commander invited me more than two months ago to put my request for forks in writing. I consented to this ridiculous request, which he sent to his superior, and what is less ridiculous, after all this pomp, we are left to eat with our fingers. . . . You would laugh if you could see our girls, one blushes to the ears, the other makes comic faces as they pass—in order to reach their cells—under crossed sabres. The cell door is then quickly closed and padlocked. . . . They are excellent and very amiable, these dear daughters. The rigor of the régime and all the privations are nothing to them. Anastasie makes shoes for her father from an old serge coat, dresses for Virginia and a corset for me, and I work passably under her direction. . . .

Gouverneur Morris personally conducted Madame de Montagu's letter to the Baron de Thugut. He contradicted the ill-treatment, despite Morris emphasized that Madame de La Fayette's letter was written under prison surveillance, and it had been censored before it reached Madame de Tessé.

"I wish that Austria had never had anything to do with them," snapped Thugut. "Madame de La Fayette may leave prison whenever she pleases, but she must not be



permitted to go backward and forward." Reasonable restriction, had the request been made; but she had asked only for eight or ten days at Vienna to consult a physician. "I will leave my daughters with their father as hostages," she offered. Blood poison had set in and was making alarming progress. To the offensiveness of her prison quarters it was largely due. All the sewers from the citadel drained into the moat that faced her cell. The moat was shallow and sometimes dry, and every change of temperature brought noxious odors. So offensive was the air that the guards who brought food were obliged to hold their noses when they entered her room. Authority gave no thought to the prisoners' welfare. After seven weeks of painful waiting, her request to the Emperor—he never received it—was denied unless she agreed never to return to the prison. This proposition she indignantly rejected. That it might not be improperly construed, she put her rejection in writing to the prison Commander, whom she now saw for the first time.

Despite Thugut's rebuff, Morris sent through him a letter to Madame de La Fayette. There was no other way to reach her. She never received it. Three days later the prisoners were denied all correspondence. Communication of any kind with the outside world was cut off. Happily, before this drastic measure was effected, Madame de La Fayette had learned through Madame de Montagu that George was with Washington; but not, as she thought, in the Mount Vernon home. To be denied her son's letters was a new cross, but it was not for the United States to learn of Austria's treatment of the General whose "liberation monarchical Europe deemed inimical to its safety."

Baron de Thugut was the superman of eighteenth century diplomacy. "If England asks for La Fayette,"

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was his parting shot to Morris, "Austria will be very glad to get rid of him in that way. They may if they please," he sneered, "turn him loose in London!" Amiable Monsieur de Thugut!

Despite the rigorous surveillance, the prisoners devised ingenious ways of secret correspondence. Before Adrienne's arrival, Felix, La Fayette's sixteen-year-old secretary, an Auvergne boy, by the aid of a flute of Pan which he fashioned, and a code devised from familiar French airs all knew, communicated with Jules, the servant of La Tour de Maubourg and de Pusy. The messages were necessarily brief. The girls secured more satisfactory communication through the sentinel outside their window. True daughters of Eve, they bribed him with food, part of their supper, tied to the end of a string and let down at night through the double bars of their window. Attached to the food was a note to Maubourg or Pusy, locked up in separate cells. In the same manner the latter transmitted food to the sentinel and messages to the La Fayettees.

Opportunities came to Adrienne (February 17, May 15, 1796) to write "*Ma chère petite sœur, Pauline*" (Madame de Montagu):

Can you picture what this frightful news we brought has been for him who had not the least idea? He was also ignorant of the dangers I had run, the persecutions I had undergone. The strength of soul with which he supports all that has been done against him the past four years in this frightful solitude, and this absolute silence, surpasses everything that I thought possible to human courage. Nevertheless, his character is not the least altered by all these tortures; but the same is not true of his health. . . . His lungs are affected. He is frightfully thin. We owe much, however, to the mildness of the winter and more to the sweetness of our reunion. . . .

Madame de La Fayette felt keenly her inability to soften the condition of La Fayette's captive companions, who were separated not only from him but from communication with each other, until Felix, and the girl's ingenuity relieved the strain. Otherwise her happiness was indescribable. Had she not for the first time in her tempestuous life the daily companionship of the object of her consuming passion? Since her fourteenth year she had suffered separation; had always been torn by anxiety over the dangers to which he was continuously exposed. She had passed the last three horrible years not knowing where he was; living or dead? would she ever see him again? To seek him and find him had been the breath of her life. Now he was hers and hers alone; no court beauty, no fawning intriguer, no unprincipled adventuress, no cruel lying gossip, no wars could intervene. "She saw each day the influence of her presence upon his health, the consolation she brought, the hope she revived in him." What multitude of interests, what common sorrows, what mutual obligations were theirs! Both were still in the prime of life—and they had their children. After all, it was good to be alive! She was startled at times to find herself again capable of so much happiness. She reproved the satisfaction she had in her situation while the beloved remained a prisoner.

The lovers learned more of each other in those twenty-three months of untold captivity than in all the years of the gay world of pomp, circumstance and popular applause. She wrote in that time only *one* letter without lively resentment of the obligation—in interest of the prisoners—to emphasize their discomfort for she wished only to speak of her own undreamed happiness.

Only the heart gifted with like capacity for love, the heart that knows the urge of its give and take, can under-



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stand the depth, the intensity, the self-immolation that were so richly Adrienne's. Fancy the nightly seances in the gruesome chamber! Only at the dinner hour—mid-day—and the hour before the night lock-up were they permitted to assemble together. Conjure the richness of the "headliners" reminiscences! How avidly Adrienne drank them in, supplementing and enlarging them with her own shrewd observations and wise deductions. Spicy interlude, we can well believe, was Anastasie's singing of the ribald Tory songs, which Abby Adams' Colonel Smith had so gaily sung in Hôtel de Bourbon. On his return to America the debonair Colonel had sent her the music and she knew them all by heart.

But Madame de La Fayette's *magnum opus*, those unbelievable days, was writing for her children the *Life of the Duchesse d'Ayen*. She was so penetrated with the thought that her happiness in Olmütz was through her mother's intercession and that of the angelic Louise that "she placed herself under their eyes; she lived with her souvenirs and she wished to make them live for her children."

In the last hectic Paris days she sought to recover from contemporaries her mother's earliest youth, of which she knew little. The writing of the *Life*—remarkable as its subject—was precipitated by discovery of an illustrated volume of Buffon that had been smuggled into the General's quarters. With a quill toothpick dipped in a bit of Chinese ink found secreted in a wall crevice she wrote the *Life* on the broad margins of the Buffon volume, framing each illustration with facts the public did not learn until its publication in Paris in 1868.

So precious was the Chinese ink that Virginia, pursuing her studies with her mother, was not permitted to use it. Not until long after her liberation when she was wife

and mother, did Virginia write for her children "*Notice sur Mme. de La Fayette, par Mme. de Lasteyrie, sa fille.*" Both lives within the same cover, and published at the same time (1868), remain the basis of everything since written of those remarkable women, so incomprehensible, for the most part, to the modern mind.

All writing, we are told, is more or less autobiographical. Had Madame de La Fayette kept a journal, as did Madame de Montagu; had her letters to Louise, her confidante since childhood, or her letters to La Fayette, been preserved, they would hardly reveal more of her own inner shrine than does the *Life of the Duchesse d'Ayen*.

It was in the design of God [she writes] that the tranquility of my mother's life should not last long at a time. [Again] her religion had no pettiness, her piety no minutiae. . . . Her mind, broad and profound at the same time, looked in the face of the smallest matters in all their aspects and saw a thousand reasons for and against each. Her direct and elevated soul, which, leaving the prejudices and the bias beneath her, was however, susceptible of impressions lively enough to have need of all the strength of her character to prevent them from injuring her judgment, separated for this strong character that which would have power to render it decisive. It seems to me to have been the source of her uncertainties, of the continual anxieties which were her torture. Although the unalterable foundation of her confidence in God delivered her from fear of death, and the uprightness of her heart was habitually the consoling response, a thousand torments were reborn without cease and troubled all the sweetness of her life.

Writing of her mother's hesitancy in accepting La Fayette as a son-in-law, she reveals—unconsciously of course—the measure of her feeling for him that time had

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wrought. "With what pleasure I learned [she was then fourteen years old] that for more than a year my mother had regarded Monsieur de La Fayette [always she speaks and writes of him as Monsieur de La Fayette] and loved him as her son. . . . She told me in detail all that she knew good of him; painted for me all that she herself thought of him, and I saw from then that he had for her that *filial* charm—if I can so express myself [she is at this time near forty], which has made the happiness of my life." . . .

It was for the Marquis de Chasteler to break the monotony of Olmütz with perhaps the most dramatic episode of its history. He arrived there a sultry day (July 25, 1797) with the Emperor Francis II's offer of liberty to the prisoners—liberty on condition they promise never to reënter Austrian territory without His Majesty's express permission. For the first time since their imprisonment the three prisoners were permitted to momentarily meet in council and decide their own fate. The proposition found them aware—how it got to them is not clear—that it was the French Government that had exacted their deliverance, stipulating, at the same time, that they could not reënter France, and suggesting they migrate to America.

Much as La Fayette longed for America, unconditional liberty was his birthright and none other would he accept. It was his ultimatum. His fellow prisoners seconded it and forthwith reclosed their prison door.

Madame de La Fayette was never prouder of the General. His decision as spokesman of the trio was the fire of her own soul. Was it not akin to the challenge she had hurled, at peril of her life, to the infamous Legendre? What if prolonged imprisonment quickened her physical sufferings, now steadily progressing, which



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she concealed with a serenity that led the dear ones to believe she was getting the better of the insidious malady?

Four months after her entrance of Olmütz, it took the form of a violent eruption that swelled her arm until she could not lift it. The infection spread to her legs with a fever that never abated. The prison doctor could not diagnose it and said so. Nor could he speak or understand French. He expressed his anxiety to the General in Latin. All intercourse with this incompetent person was under the eyes of the prison guard especially appointed to witness it.

Notwithstanding official and professional recognition of her plight, there was not the slightest amelioration of the prison régime. During eleven months of steadily increasing pain, not an easy chair for her weary body, not a single material comfort was provided.

Uncomplainingly she accepted conditions and smiled on. It was the Divine Will, otherwise how could her seemingly reasonable request for relief be so ruthlessly ignored?

Significantly, as her health declined, La Fayette's waxed amazingly until there was now little evidence of the suffering five years' confinement imposed.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE WORLD OF EMIGRÉS

WHO or what liberated the prisoners remains the mooted question. Significantly, never in world history, perhaps, were like power, influence, prestige exercised so continuously and over so long a period—five years and one month—in behalf of political prisoners. Austria declared it was in deference to the United States. La Fayette was disposed to credit it to Bonaparte, whose “victories for France had given him the liveliest joy.” He also believed it was Bonaparte himself, and not the Directory of the Republic, that had inserted in the latter’s request made of Austria that the prisoners be set at liberty “*without, however, being allowed for the present to go to France.*”

Had the Little Corporal consulted his own feelings, unquestionably he would have left La Fayette to die in Olmütz, but the “demands of England, France and the United States were too strong to be ignored by the dictator lurking under the masque of the liberator.”

That it was an accomplished fact—September 19, 1797—was sufficient for the liberated.

Never shall be known how much Adrienne’s quick-witted diplomacy contributed to the happy finale. For two months following the prisoners’ ultimatum to General Marquis de Chasteler—the Emperor’s envoy—they had awaited the outcome with bated breath, as did the interested within and without Olmütz.

Irrespective of swollen arms and running sores on her

legs, Adrienne's quill toothpick worked tirelessly. Too well she knew the wily Thugut! To the Baron she wrote letters, to be copied and forwarded to him. She enclosed them with instructions to that effect to the Comtesse de La Tour-Maubourg and Madame de Pusy confidently awaiting at Dresden the prisoners' arrival. Pillet, the General's former aide-de-camp was also there and to him she intrusted advice for the faithful Louis Romeuf, also a former aide-de-camp. Romeuf, at his own ardent solicitation, had been intrusted by the French Government with their liberation. She cautioned him against the slightest move that would compromise himself or La Fayette's principles. The latter were to be preserved at any cost.

When the order finally came to forward march, the little army was ready. They had nothing to pack. Like birds of the air, their possessions were upon their backs. As for Adrienne, her one priceless treasure was the Buffon volume enclosing her *Life of Duchesse d'Ayen*. Into the official carriages waiting in the courtyard stepped the General, Adrienne and the girls, followed by La Tour-Maubourg, Bureaux de Pusy, Felix, Chavaniac, Jules and lesser valets. The great prison gates swung open. The first intake of the crisp autumn air, and the prisoners struggled for breath. For several days, breathing came painfully, so unaccustomed were their lungs to fresh ozone. Then gradually, like wilted flowers suddenly immersed in fresh water, they bobbed up and glowed with new-found life.

Major von Annerhammer, an Austrian officer, mounted, led the cortège, which, in deference to Adrienne, proceeded slowly Baltic-ward. The route through Austria and Germany covered Dresden, Leipzig, Halle and minor cities. Everywhere there were ovations. It re-



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called the return from Paris to Chavaniac, seven momentous years past. But where the ex-Commander of the National Guard was then the consuming interest, Madame de La Fayette now had special tribute, so insidiously had her immolation in the dungeon of Olmütz seeped into the Teutonic imagination. For politics and Napoleon's victories aside, humans are ever the same; and along the route commoners recognized—if they did not anticipate—Madame de Staël's eulogy:

"Antiquity offers nothing more noble than the conduct of Mme. de La Fayette and her daughters in the prison of Olmütz. . . . The admirable Madame, just escaped from the dungeons of Robespierre, lost not a single day in proceeding to incarcerate herself with her husband and expose herself to all the sufferings that have abridged her life."

Heroically Adrienne smothered mounting pain, and valiantly responded to the spirit of the crowds. Everywhere she graciously acknowledged the homage paid her and the girls.

The Austrian frontier crossed, the military escort released its charges "to follow the worst road ever," while it made direct for the United States Consul and the Austrian Embassy at Hamburg.

Next day the liberated were expected to cross the Elbe in an open boat, "the weather be what it may." But they saw a ship in the harbor, gay with American flags. It looked good to them. They went aboard and dined with the Captain. It was five o'clock in the evening before they reached Hamburg, and they were expected there at ten that morning. "And so," grumbles the Morris diary, "they wasted their own and everybody else's time." For which we are jolly well glad!

Had the American "busybody" or the imperial "top

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hat" had five years and one month or twenty-three months of Olmütz, how considerate would he have been of the other fellow's time?

The Emperor's envoy, Baron Buol von Schaucustein, with whom Morris, dining at the Austrian Legation, was interrupted over the walnuts and the wine by the United States Consul's announcement of the delinquents' arrival, hastened to the ceremony of delivering the prisoners over—presumably to freedom—which the Baron did "with measured terms and much dignity." But the inconsiderate delay continues to rumple Morris until the protesting thump of his wooden leg is almost audible!

As for "everybody else," they good-humoredly held up the streets from the wharf to the American Consul's quarters.

A line was formed through the dense crowd to let the prisoners pass to my room [wrote United States Consul Parrish to Washington] La Fayette led the way and was followed by his infirm lady and two daughters. He flew into my arms; his wife and daughters clung to me. A silence—an expressive silence—took place. It was broken by the exclamation: "My friend! My dearest friend! My deliverer! See the work of your generosity! My poor, poor wife hardly able to support herself." And indeed she was not standing, but hanging on my arm, imbued with tears, while her two lovely daughters had hold of each other. The scene was extremely affecting and I was very much agitated. Again the Marquis came to my arms, his heart overflowing with gratitude. He is a very handsome man, showing [thanks to Adrienne's care] to have suffered but little from his confinement.

Next day the liberated dine at Neusteden, the United States Consul's country place. Morris is there, and that night his diary records "La Fayette proposes much gratitude for my services, but this I do not expect and shall

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indeed be disappointed if it ever goes beyond profession." Comment unworthy the ex-Minister as it was unjust to the La Fayettees; for never were people more appreciative of service, more prompt to acknowledge it and when in their power more generously reciprocate. Always theirs was the inherent courtesy of the well-bred. No hazard of fortune found them dilatory in the social amenities or niggardly in discharging an obligation.

Hamburg was overrun with *émigrés*, "wandering there, as elsewhere, in prescribed wretchedness." They bombarded the distinguished prisoners, whom they had reviled and abandoned, as they had their King and Queen. Were they not giving them and the town "one perfect day"?

Lodgings had been prepared for the liberated at Altona. But, like the American ship, the Hamburg inn seemed good, and there they tarried, "foolishly running up," to the alarm of the United States Consul and particularly the ex-Minister, "fifty guineas in two days."

Comtesse de Tessé had abandoned her Altona *pied à terre* for a well-stocked farm and dairy at Wittmold, twenty-five miles to the north. The purchase covered one of the small islands of Lake Pleon. Opposite Wittmold, on the other side of the lake, was the village of Pleon. The La Fayettees and the two ex-aides-de-camp arrived there from Hamburg by coach. It was a German custom for the postilion to announce the arrival of a coach with a fanfare. This early October day its shrill blast was Gluck melody to impatiently waiting Wittmold. Madame de Montagu, now Aunt de Tessé's first aid in transmitting her orders to underlings, and Chevalier de Mun, put out at once in an open boat for Pleon.

Never in its long placid history, perhaps, was Lake Pleon agitated by a more pathetically colorful flotilla



than met the belated travelers. Into the first boat stepped the General, Anastasie and Monsieur de Montagu, with de La Tour-Maubourg at the rudder. The second was reserved to Madame de La Fayette, Virginia and Madame de Montagu, while the pilot was Monsieur de Mun. Adrienne faced Pauline, and before the boat was fairly under way she voiced, as on first glimpsing the towers of Olmütz, the Canticle of Tobias. Madame de Montagu recounted the efforts that had been made to liberate her, but nothing moved her so deeply as the prayer chain formed by President Le Rebours, Made-moiselle de la Luzerne and other *émigrés*. Daily, from all parts, petitions had been lifted to God in interest of the Olmütz prisoners. . . .

Suddenly, the Wittmold salon and dining-room, so long accustomed to silence, bristles with life, wit, controversy. Comtesse de Tessé, back to her *métier*, holds her auditors often for "quarter of an hour in unbroken silence."

How good once more a "full house"! Prison woes, physical ills are taboo. Politics is the absorbing topic. What France wished or did not wish; had the King done *this*, the Queen *that*, Mirabeau the *other*; the ifs and the buts, the pros and the cons of the Revolution were thrashed out as they continue to be thrashed by scholars and historians with no nearer unanimous conclusion than the Wittmold talkers reached.

The General's aides-de-camp, lodged at Pleon, rowed over every day to Wittmold. They brought more mind and less passion to the discussions. Indeed, the "harshness of the liberated was less against the Revolution that had proscribed them, than against the *émigrés* who had rejoiced in their fall; the princes who had not leaned upon them and their friends."

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As for the General, he was at once in touch with all that had passed since his exclusion from the world. He loved Comtesse de Tessé. Theirs was complete community of opinion in things political. His career always had her approval. After the silence of Olmütz how alive and piquant her comments! He launched out as in the dawn of the Revolution. He was the same at Wittmold as he had been all his life everywhere; no grudge, no hatred against person or party, but unchanged in opinions. It was the La Fayette who wrote Adrienne from Rochefort in 1792: "I have no regrets, no reproach of conscience for my political acts, words or thoughts." Always with him it was the Rights of Man which he formulated—the first in Europe—a fact of which, as has been said, he was infinitely proud.

How trying to the Wittmold royalists! Fruitful occasion, however, for Madame de Montagu to exercise charity and patience, and we are quite prepared for the letter she wrote to her soul-affinity, Rosalie (Madame de Grammont):

Gilbert is just as good, just as simple in his behavior, just as affectionate in his loving ways as you have always known him. He loves his children tenderly, and in spite of his cold exterior is very sweet to his wife. His manners are gracious with a phlegmatic bearing that does not deceive me or his secret desire to be in a position to take part in things. *I avoid as much as possible talking to him on anything that concerns the Revolution, both as to what he upholds and what he condemns. I am afraid to burst out, and I am afraid to hurt his feelings.* I am glad to see that my reserve is approved by the others. To be patient and evade are my rules of behavior toward him. Poor Gilbert! May God keep him from going back to the stage. . . . *His blindness and his moral frenzy for liberty are a cross for me.*

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Did Madame de La Fayette suspect the truth of Madame de Montagu's summary of the situation to Rosalie: "He is all ready to reëmbark on the ill-jointed raft of 1791 and risk his fortune and that of others in the enterprise?" She not only suspected, but she knew, and it filled her with a disquietude the insidious malady was powerless to dull. America—the El Dorado at end of every milestone of their hazardous way—she felt it steadily receding. La Fayette mentioned it at Hamburg and was urged to decide seriously and make it known at once to John Adams, President.

"You are not wanted in France," Morris told him. "America will make proper provision and put you in easy circumstances."

"If my wife can sell her property in France," hedged La Fayette, deceiving no one but himself, that he meant to "avoid all intrigues and every interference in affairs of his country," "she will, after paying her debts, have some little left, and *very little* will satisfy me."

"I think he is very much mistaken," Morris confides to the diary, mindful of the "fifty guineas in two days." Then the United States Consul makes known La Fayette's decision, which gives the ex-Minister's gratuitous advice a jolt: "It is impracticable to go to America this autumn [1797]," wrote the General.

Was it Adrienne's condition that decided him? There is no record to that effect. Like Mary of old, she kept many things within her heart and pondered well upon them, those readjusting days on the Baltic. Nothing short of death could deter her from sailing the seven seas to any port that might safeguard Gilbert from renewal of the physical dangers, the political treacheries of the unhappy past.

Five weeks of Wittmold brought her "strength, calm



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and almost happiness." What thoughts went with her needle into the garments she sewed for Pauline's poor! What memories to the make-over of the girls' dresses and the mending of their linen!

Madame de Montagu's sewing circle, to which Altona and Hamburg's "developed and half-developed souls" flocked, was the cradle from which sprung *Cœuvres des Emigrés*, a famous organization that spread over the Continent, as did later the Red Cross of Geneva.

The circle, confined at this time to Aunt de Tessé's drawing-room, was given to one member reading aloud while the needles of the others danced thoughtfully. However remote from romance or "best sellers" were the favorites: Fénelon, Bossuet or the Book of Job, there was much chatting over what was read. "Madame de La Fayette's comments," observed a listener, "were often more beautiful than the text." . . .

The General soon chafed under the restrictions that hedged his liberty. Figuratively, he was still with ball and chain. He was forbidden to re-enter France or to sojourn in Germany. "Too Republican for Vienna, too Royalist for Paris," America alone had the latch string out. If he insisted, an English vessel would transport him. Had not Lord Grenville, before the doors of Olmütz opened, been assured when asked for his liberty: "You may, if you please, send him thither [to America], under such a weight of notorious obligations that he shall be incapable of disserving you." True son of France, La Fayette preferred to observe at close range what passed in his own country. So, after five weeks with Aunt de Tessé, he leased at Lemkühlen in Holstein, two miles from Wittmold, a large château. There the family, together with a number of La Tour-Maubourgs, passed the winter until Easter.

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February brought George Washington de La Fayette and the faithful Frestel. During the three years at Mount Vernon, George had grown to "a fine, gallant youth." He was now nineteen years old—his father's age when he made the "cruel departure." On landing at Havre he had gone direct to Paris, expecting to meet the family there. He called upon Bonaparte, to pay his respects. The rising sun was not at home, but Josephine received him with the graciousness of the future Empress. "Your father and my husband must make common cause," said she, her heart seeing in the "gallant youth" her own son, and little dreaming how Napoleon was to worst the three.

George brought his father this letter from Washington. When he wrote it, Washington was not certain that the La Fayettees had left Olmütz. Read it and rejoice with Adrienne:

The conduct of your young son, well worthy such parents as you and your amiable wife, has been, since he put foot on American soil, exemplary under all *rapports*, and has procured him the affection and confidence of all who have had the pleasure to know him. His filial affection, his ardent desire to embrace his parents and his sisters in the first moment of the deliverance have not permitted him to wait for authentic news. . . . I have not refused my assent to his departure, in order to fly into the arms of those so dear to him, because since the last news he ought to find them in Paris.

M. Frestel has been a true mentor for George; a father would not have watched with more care a cherished son, and he merits in the highest degree all that can be said of his virtue, his good judgment, his prudence. Your son and he carry with them the wishes and regrets of our family and all who know them.

Everybody was happy! But Madame de La Fayette's pride and joy in the son for whom she had made so many

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sacrifices, and whose military career Napoleon was to thwart without weakening the boy's courage or his patriotism, was not long without alloy. She feared for the Pope driven from the States, and the *émigrés*, including her father, chased from Switzerland back to Germany. There was no telling how far French arms would go.

Madame de Tessé talked of selling Wittmold and keeping her cows at Astrakan. "No one, perhaps," she said, and her mouth grimaced grotesquely as in blue stocking days, "would find me *there*." She thought of emigrating to America. It was the bee in every bonnet. How to get there was the rub; nobody had the price.

Early in the Revolution, the Duc d'Ayen, solicitous of his health, had sought Switzerland, leaving to the Duchesse d'Ayen and the Vicomtesse de Noailles the care of his aged parents. He was there in comfortable hiding when his father, the Maréchal, passed out at Saint-Germain, leaving him the title of Duc de Noailles; and there he remained, while his mother, wife and daughter went to the guillotine. Unable to recover Hôtel de Noailles, he married, in Switzerland, a French Comtesse, to the shock of Pauline who adored him. With that he passes to an oblivion that would have rejoiced the object of his implacable hatred—Madame du Barry.

Revolutions come and revolutions go, but "never in great States," to repeat de Sully, "are they an effect of chance nor of the people's caprice." "Man's inhumanity to man" may grind humans to vassalage; crush them to earth, but with the first intake of freedom's breath, first touch with God's world, the spirit of mortal rebounds, and life goes on in the same old way. The La Fayettees were of the eternal verities.

The Marquise de Simiane, escaped from France under a false passport and the chaperonage of an old Jacobin,



pursued the exiles to Wittmold. Bursting with sympathy, she was prepared to weep over and with the La Fayettees, particularly the General. To her amazement she found the little world of *émigrés* buzzing with marriage and baptism projects.

The Marquise de Simiane—well to recall—was the Paris beauty variously credited with having precipitated La Fayette's flight to America. Obviously she was the most *adhesive*, if not the most serious, of his flirtations. She was of Little Trianon frivolities and Epée de Bois gallantries. Undoubtedly, she was the "unknown correspondent" and the heroine of an amusing incident Comte de Ségur's delightful *Memoirs* relate. The Comte was surprised by a stately visit from the old Maréchal de Noailles—Adrienne's grandfather. The Maréchal begged Ségur, then young La Fayette's running mate, in the name of all the Noailles family, to rouse the taciturn young Benedict from his torpor and make him take an interest in something. The Comte was vastly amused by the Maréchal's request, for he had just escaped that morning from the vehemence of his friend La Fayette, who had urged him for hours to fight an unnecessary duel in defense of a lady of the Court he had been hotly enamored of for some days, and whom he fancied had been insulted. He insisted that Ségur was likewise smitten with her charms, though he knew nothing of it.

The Marquise de Simiane and her cavalier tarried, this spring of 1798, with her old friend Comtesse de Tessé. She found Wittmold and Lemkühlen divided over Comte Charles La Tour-Maubourg's proposal for Anastasie in marriage.

The Comte was the youngest brother of La Fayette's aide-de-camp who had shared Olmütz imprisonment. The young folk had seen much of each other since Comte

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Charles reached Hamburg to welcome his brother. Later he was often with his kin at the Lemkühlen château. His charming face, the lofty sentiments he expressed with excessive laconism, Virginia tells us, "appealed very much to Anastasie, to whom silence was less inconvenient than the smallest thing said askew."

Anastasie had the fresh, agreeable face of youth, much self-distrust and few or no illusions. "She loved her mother tenderly, her father madly"; was not unlike him in temper and had his taste for controversy. She was studious, courageous, as we know, but she had less initiative than her tenderly loved mother.

The Comte was her senior in years. Like the Comtesse de Tessé's spouse, he was reticent if not inarticulate. There could be no question of the disinterestedness of his affection, as Anastasie had no dot. (Her mother had brought La Fayette 200,000 livres a year.) "Nothing but her youth, virtues and contempt for riches," as Madame de La Fayette said to the inquiring. As for the Comte, he had no fear of poverty. Had he not felt it? His income at this momentous crisis was thirty thousand francs (\$1,200), and it was a loan from his eldest brother, the ex-prisoner, and not immediately available.

Madame de La Fayette not only considered the proposal suitable but as "advantageous as one had a right to hope for." He was good-looking. Virtue and fortune aside, good looks to her thinking was no small asset in the consideration of a suitor. Above all, he was the friend of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

Wittmold was not so kindly disposed towards the project. Protest arose from every side, and for a time a merry war was on, which amusedly kept the Marquise de Simiane and her cavalier guessing.

"Nothing like it outside North American Indians,"

chuckled the Comte de Mun. His son, the gay Marquis, who played practical jokes on Madame de Montagu at the expense of her charity clients, was more lenient.

"Nothing like it, I say," sputtered Comtesse de Tessé, "since Adam and Eve." Her liege lord was noncommittal. Did it bring back to him the twenty long years ago when he set all Paris laughing by presenting his voluble Comtesse to whom up to that time he had not spoken since their wedding day, a snuff box inscribed with a red-hot love passage from "Phèdre"?

The Montagus were also discreet in passing on the penniless Comte as a desirable *parti*. As for Adrienne and the General, loyal to the heart desire of their Anastasie, they remained deaf to Wittmold objections.

Aunt de Tessé—"Old Reliability"—recognizing their decision was irrevocable, rose to the situation and not only contributed the bride's trousseau but had it made in Wittmold, with "much calculation and happy results."

Shortly before the wedding (May 9, 1799) the La Fayettees abandoned Lemkühlen for Wittmold. Up to this, Adrienne had guardedly endured the abscesses that broke out afresh under her arms, but at Wittmold there was no concealing the ravages of the deposit in the legs. She could no longer walk. Calm and firm as the children had ever seen her, she speeded the wedding preparations. There should be no halting for her. Back and forth, from chamber to salon, George Washington de La Fayette carried his mother on a sofa. From the latter she smilingly approved of the little group of earnest wedding garment weavers.

In Wittmold chapel, "the most beautiful part of the old château," Comtesse de Tessé's chaplain, Abbé Luchet, married the young lovers. George and the groom made a seat of their strong young hands and car-



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ried their mother, in wedding garment—spiritual if not sartorial—to the ceremony.

Was it dream? Was it reality? Adrienne was not quite sure. "When I think," she said at the wedding breakfast, "of the horrible situation in which we all were such a short time ago, and I see my three children, and a fourth after my own heart that I am to adopt, how can I sufficiently thank God!"

Ten days later there was a baptism—not in the beautiful chapel—but at the bedside of Madame de Montagu. She had given birth to a daughter. In English exile her first-born had died and she had left it among strangers in a Richmond churchyard. In absence of the Abbé, Comtesse de Tessé deluged the crying infant with *eau de cologne*, made the sign of the cross and pronounced it baptized. In spite of her contention that one baptism was as good as another, Abbé Luchet re-administered the rite with bona fide holy water!

The Comtesse had gotten away from much of the heretic philosophy of her old friend Voltaire, but she was still as remote from *true* faith as her religious kleptomaniac mother, many of whose eccentricities she inherited, while her mentality remained Noailles.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THREE SISTERS MEET

THE spring of 1799 finds the La Fayettees at Vianen, a Dutch village on an arm of the Rhine in the neighborhood of Utrecht. A curious world of *émigrés* was gathered there awaiting return of royalty to France. Madame de La Fayette being somewhat stronger, the General leased a house and there he awaited, with the rest of his compatriots, hazard of fortune. The renewed declaration of war of March 15, 1799, which darkened the hopes of the *émigrés*, set La Fayette dreaming anew of the establishment of liberty as he had originally conceived and imagined it.

Adrienne's hair was become quite grey and she looked the forty years she had lived. Madame de Montagu and Madame de Grammont joined her Holy Week. It was the three sisters' first meeting together in eight years. Madame de Montagu (Pauline) was now thirty-two, Madame de Grammont (Rosalie) thirty-one. All had suffered the "stings of outrageous fortune," but none so devastatingly, physically, as Madame de La Fayette.

The Montagus and the Grammonts, while homeless wanderers in England and Switzerland, had lost children which they replaced at earliest moment, for birth control was not of Noailles blood or ethics. Education more than nature had given the sisters a striking resemblance to each other. Nevertheless each maintained a distinctive physiognomy.

Madame de Grammont, the youngest, was very much

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more retiring and reticent than either Adrienne or Pauline. Precocious as a child, she developed rapidly. Hers were a strength of soul and an unshakable firmness at every crisis. Unlike her sisters, as has been said, she married late—nineteen. There was a long list of desirable suitors, but she was not always in accord with her parents' choice. She weighed and balanced one suitor with the other and finally accepted the Marquis de Grammont. "I do not believe happiness is found on this earth," Rosalie maintained. "Nor is it well to impose duties upon oneself that one perceives can become a source of pain." Evidently Monsieur de Grammont was painless. In Saint-Roche, like all her sisters save Adrienne, she was married with religious solemnity in the autumn of 1788. Outside her matrimonial choice—Monsieur de Grammont was political follower of La Fayette and Vicomte de Noailles—her sentiments soared above all human interests. She wrote and talked in a language firm and elevated as her thoughts. Unlike her elder sisters, she was small of stature, a little stiff in manner, and had pronounced features devoid of feminine sweetness or grace. "Her inexhaustible goodness was in her actions rather than in her face." Seemingly "nature had lost all empire over her. She obeyed nothing but duty, even in loving her neighbor and doing good." Can't you see her, hear her, feel her? She saw revolutions, catastrophes of every kind, public and private. She supported them all, not with indifference but with unflinching stoicism. "I have lived through 1793, why should anything astonish me?" demanded the philosopher destined to be a mother nine times, to be robbed eight times by death of her nearest and dearest, and to outlive her family, dying at eighty-five.

Neither of the sisters at this period could find a re-



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treat in France. All were dependent upon the settlement of the Duchesse d'Ayen's estate. It was held up, as it had been the last three years, owing to the scattering of the heirs and the proscription law which prevented their assembly in Paris.

To spare the General from feeding a family of fifteen or sixteen the Montagus and the Grammonts made a common purse for food. As it was, the sisters were often hungry. They were forced to meet in a fireless chamber, each wrapped in her pelisse to keep out the wind whistling through the casements; their feet on a tempermental foot-warmer to escape freezing. Despite physical discomfort, they whispered—considerate of sleeping husbands and children—to one and two o'clock in the morning.

Irrespective of cold, hunger, long separation and irreparable tragedies, together they examined and compared, as they had in childhood in Hôtel de Noailles, their soul defects; sought to recognize and clarify their duty.

Rosalie found that the large and divers movements through which Pauline had passed had painted her physiognomy with fire. "She wished me," records the *Montagu Journal* published in 1868 for the benefit of the poor, "to be more calm, to read and meditate." Paradoxically, it is Madame de Montagu who charges Madame de La Fayette with worldliness, rather than Madame de Grammont, who had eschewed the gay world. Can this be the Pauline never known to miss a Versailles ball or a Paris function when her pleasure-loving grouch of a father-in-law requested her company? The Pauline first to attend Consul Lebrun's soirées in the Tuileries? True, she was there with her eye out for recovery of Hôtel de Noailles which the Consul subse-

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quently usurped when Napoleon unhoused him. The Pauline first at the Court levees of Louis XVIII?

"You have your mother's eyes," said His Majesty, and she courtesied profoundly.

"Adrienne is not enough of the *interieur*," goes on the *Journal*. "She reckons too much on worldly happiness, at least upon the consolation that one can have on this earth. As for the rest, she is admirable by her faith, her zeal, her submission and straightforwardness. In every instance I find in her a model. Her brilliancy and learning strike me more than ever. Her goodness is imperturbable and *encourages me to correct her of her faults because she listens always in a ravishing manner*. Indeed, one may say that God gave to her that which is necessary for the imposing career to which he had destined her."

Irritating Madame de Montagu!

How Adrienne must have smiled to herself!

At Vianen the sisters composed a litany in memory of their mother and sister. Daily they repeated it in unison, "and it seemed to them that the departed were with them."

"We quit earth for some moments to make known to them our needs and our hopes."

They resolved to repeat the litany daily the rest of their lives and undoubtedly they did.

The trio separated within a month of their meeting, the tie that bound them strengthened rather than weakened by the courageous interchange of self-analysis. Miracle—safe to wager—without counterpart in twentieth century family life.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### THE BULL BY THE HORNS

THE horse chestnut trees are abloom in the Champs-Élysées; the gardens of Hôtel de Noailles redolent of spring birth and lilac perfume. Le Nôtre's flower beds are atangle with weeds and thistles. The savagery of growth is back to its own in the riotousness of untrammelled nature.

Alone, Madame de La Fayette passes the Garden's formidable wall lost in the grill of the Orangerie of the Tuileries; passes the great gates of the old home, never to open to her again.

Consul Lebrun, now occupying the Pavillon de Flore of the Tuileries, is soon to be routed by Napoleon from its historic splendor, for the future Emperor desires it for himself. Lebrun will eventually usurp Hôtel de Noailles and establish there his family, defying subsequent efforts of the Duc d'Ayen and Madame de Montagu to oust him and regain possession.

It is almost two years since Adrienne's liberation from Olmütz. Despite the increasing gravity of the malady, largely due to a convalescence continuously broken by over-strenuous demands upon her strength, she has come a second time to Paris.

The material interests of the entire family are dependent upon her. She is the only one exempt from the proscription law; the only one privileged to enter France. It is for her to rescue for the loved ones whatever the Revolution has spared of their once colossal fortune.



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She left the General and George in Holland with the excellent Dutch patriot, General Van Ryssol; Anastasie and the newly born with her husband's family in Utrecht. Assured of their safety, she fared forth with Virginia, exempted by youth from proscription but grown wise and companionable beyond her years.

In the poor Paris home of the faithful Beauchets they found heartening welcome. From its cautious sheltering confidence, Adrienne surveyed the situation, and, like a general, planned her attack upon the ruling powers. The Terrorist Party had resumed alarming strength. The coalition troops had great advantage at several crucial points.

The English Army debarked, this summer of 1799, at Helder. Paris was in a perpetual ferment. All she saw, all she heard, frightened her until property interests vanished before the barrier she sensed might rise to separate her from Gilbert. Contrary to the order of General Brune, the Dutch Government had humanely retained him. But if he could not count on the protection of the French armies, and the Coalition made counter-revolution in Holland, what would become of him? Imprisonment? Death?

No one spoke openly in Paris. A guarded, ominous silence pervaded. For a time she was distraught. What to do? Whither turn? No one of the old Patriotic Party was available; not one in power to rely upon. Intensive reflection decided her to seek Sieyès. Personally, the ex-priest was honest, and for the time being high in popular esteem. "Skillful spinner of cobweb constitutions," he had succeeded the corrupt Reubell as administrator, and was one of the five members of the Directory that followed the Reign of Terror.

Sieyès, she knew, was opposed to the Jacobin party

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he had formerly advocated; opposed to the Mountain (extremists) that had tolerated him because of his hatred of the aristocracy. He aimed to perpetuate the Republic, but, as she little suspected, in a bureaucratic or autocratic form.

She found him ready for business in the Luxembourg of hallowed and unhallowed memories. The dangers that La Fayette ran in exile; the complications and inutility of his position in Holland, she recounted to Sieyès.

"I warn you, Monsieur l'Abbé"—the dignity and persuasive vehemence of the Duchesse d'Ayen were suddenly hers. Did she feel her mother's presence in this, her *ante mortem* prison house? "I warn you, if the foreign armies are successful, Monsieur de La Fayette will seek an asylum in French territory."

"That would be very imprudent," bristled Abbé Sieyès. At the moment he was in quest of a "man of ability in war and probity in civil affairs to act as a figure head in his long projected constitution." "I believe, Madame, that Monsieur de La Fayette will be safer in the States of the Prussian King."

"Who has held him prisoner five years?"

Did the ex-priest, who hated the aristocracy, wince? "I assure you, Monsieur l'Abbé, Monsieur de La Fayette would prefer—were it necessary—a prison in his own country," she concluded, "but he has no more confidence in it."

Paris continued in an alarming state of uncertainty.

Foot-sore—no money for carriage hire—always heart sick from humiliating contacts with corrupt, if not brutal, politicians; unable to get redress for the spoliation or confiscation of her properties, Adrienne returned day after day to the Beauchet's humble roof often to find censorious letters from the sheltered *émigrés*. The Gen-

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eral ruminating with agreeable friends when not writing his *Memoirs*; the well-provided Wittmold ménage and the aides-de-camp comfortably quartered at Pleon—the whole ignorant of the conditions that she confronted—reproved her. With the inconsiderateness of the “best regulated families” of every caste and clime, they advised, criticised, instructed or imposed impossible commissions. They were so accustomed to shifting to her uncomplaining shoulders burdens they were unwilling or unable to bear, that they made known their wants without a scruple.

“*La Citoyenne La Fayette, chez le Citoyen Beauchet*” finally fell off her pedestal of seemingly beatified patience and self-sacrifice. How we rejoice in the fall and its human come-back! The pebble that riled her ocean of serenity—safe to infer—was the General’s request that she find a “good writer and a good patriot” to write a book he had planned—“the first in France comparing the laws of the new régime with those of the old.” Enough to make angels weep!

Coming in wake of the previous complaints, requests, commissions and exhortations of his associates, it stirred her to the quick. To Gilbert she wrote sharply and to the point. It was the first *real* shock of the General’s matrimonial career. Contritely he replied: “I see with deep regret, my dear heart, that I have involuntarily wounded you. . . . It is you who bear all the burdens of the day. I am pleased with all you say and all you do, but more with what you are.” . . .

With the eighteenth Brumaire (November, 1799) the uncertainty of the situation changed. Bonaparte, disgraced in 1795, now imposed his will upon France. Justice was at last to be proclaimed. So said, so believed the harassed world when it learned of the appointment of the provisional consuls: Bonaparte, Sieyès, Ducos.



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Madame de La Fayette's clear reasoning and uncanny intuition sized up the triumvirate and without further parley she decided it was expedient for La Fayette to come to Paris.

To decide with her was to act. She secured him a passport under an assumed name. Motier, Hartford, Connecticut, U. S. A., was honorably retired for one presumably more acceptable to current authority. She sent the passport to the General by Monsieur Alexandre Romeuf, his former aide-de-camp, now of Bonaparte's staff and a brother of the Louis Romeuf, who had brought to Olmütz the French Government's demand for La Fayette's release.

Adrienne was so accustomed to La Fayette's mode of "thought and action; she judged and executed with such unerring insight and tact what was proper for him to do, that his confidence in her opinion was absolute."

Without question or hesitancy, he accepted the passport and followed her instructions. When he reached Paris, Bonaparte, nominally First Consul, was virtually the whole Government. When he learned of La Fayette's arrival, he was furious and made it known. He wished him to solicit his return, as did the rest of the *émigré* world, on his knees, figuratively, if not literally.

There was a lively gathering of the triumvirate. It declared he must return to Utrecht and await there his turn in cancellation from the list of the proscribed. Powerful friends who had approached Bonaparte in behalf of La Fayette prior to Adrienne's seizing the bull by the horns, dared not say another word to the irate First Consul, who in Secret Commission had already established autocracy.

Undaunted, without "book, bell or candle," Adrienne bearded him alone in the consular bureau, transferred

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from the Luxembourg to the Tuileries. It was the fine room that had held the Tribunal Commission and where all the murder decrees had been signed, even that of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette. "The Little Corporal" received her graciously. An offspring of the House of Noailles—"four hundred years the most powerful family of France outside of royalty"—come to him in suppliance was to the First Consul foretaste of what he willed to exact of all Europe—if not the world!

Warily she took in the Man of Destiny: his high forehead, dark hair, dark eyes fixed upon her without animation; his swarthy piercing countenance that held without intimidating her. She was not to be deceived by his assumed patriotism.

Briefly, pungently she revealed to the *quasi* Frenchman, the embryonic demagogue, La Fayette's situation in Holland. "No need of his wife to tell General Bonaparte—'the People's Champion'—what a favorable effect Monsieur de La Fayette's return to France would have on all patriotic citizens," she concluded.

The nobility of her manner, the prudence of her address, the soul that looked into his through eyes that had seen so much cruelty and injustice, suffered so profoundly, were not lost upon Bonaparte, the man. He was visibly impressed. She saw and felt his emotion, but she did not trust him.

"I am charmed, Madame, to make your acquaintance," he said. "You have much mind but you do not understand affairs. The General does, and tell him I rely upon his patriotism to remain in obscurity." How the self-appointed Ambassadors must have inwardly seethed! What restraint to hold her peace!

Had Bonaparte understood affairs that day in the Tuileries as did Madame de La Fayette, had he seen

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beyond his colossal ego and consuming ambitions into the eternal verities—and heeded them—would there have been a Waterloo?

With the eyes of the soul she saw through Bonaparte as he never truly saw himself until St. Helena forced upon him introspection. "It was not armies that dethroned me," he there confided to a friend, "but the progress of new ideas to which I paid no attention."

Agreed that La Fayette should remain openly in France without further authorization, Madame de La Fayette took leave of the First Consul. To await in the obscurity of the country the legal end of his proscription was no hardship for La Fayette. To Adrienne it was a nameless relief, an unforeseen joy.

George Washington de La Fayette had rejoined his father in Paris. Anastasie arrived from Holland with her Charles and the daughter. Together the *émigrés* retired to Fontenay, Madame de Montagu's country home, her portion of the family inheritance. Subsequently, Madame de La Fayette recovered La Grange as her share of the Duchesse d'Ayen's estate, the princely ancestral home of her birth in the department of Seine-et-Marne, fourteen miles from Paris. There the La Fayettees established themselves *en famille*. Close to Nature's heart, together they would pick up life's broken threads, together rethread the loom of their destiny. But neither for Gilbert nor for Adrienne could there be a *real* rehabilitation of La Grange until they achieved the return of their prison companions—Maubourg and Pusy.

What had been accorded La Fayette could not be denied them. The new government was well disposed but it was reluctant to take a measure that put the officers that had followed him into exile in an exceptional category.



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Many difficulties hedged the situation; much was to be overcome before they could be permitted to return to France. How burn the barriers away? Who to undertake the intricate task? Instinctively, La Grange turned to Adrienne. Did she plead illness, fatigue, need of rest, weariness unto death? Uncomplainingly back and forth, day in day out she went—fortunately there was now price of a carriage—from La Grange to Paris. Not a stone did she leave unturned until the Government yielded and the faithful friends of Olmütz were on their native heath.

“Not one prisoner but owed to her personally his cancellation.” Her intercession at the Seats of the Mighty was not limited to the prisoners. It included Comte and Comtesse de Tessé, the General’s former aide-de-camp, Comte d’Arblay—Fanny Burney’s husband—and like noblesse.

Toward the spring of 1803, the d’Arblays and their son were in Paris. Madame de La Fayette, waiving formality, sought them in their modest apartment and to La Grange they came for some days’ visit. Little within or without the Château, now somewhat restored to pre-Revolution liveableness, with apartments for Anastasie and her babes, George and his bride, Comtesse de Tessé, who insisted on “no new-fangled English convenience,” and Virginia on eve of marriage, escaped the X-ray-like eyes of the author of *Evelina*.

Fanny Burney was impressed by Madame de La Fayette’s “singularly expressive eyes” but not to the point of mentioning their color. That she found her “far from handsome” she frankly admits. As for her manners, they were for the English guest what they had always been for everybody, “pleasing and amiable and her mind religiously humble.” The General was un-

changed save "he displayed on every occasion the tenderest gratitude to his wife who followed him to captivity, and to whom *from that period*, he became by universal account, far more warmly and *exclusively* attached than he had *ever been formerly*; though her virtues and conduct had always been objects to him of respect and esteem." *Voilà!*

La Grange, at this period, when Madame de La Fayette's "happiness there was beyond everything she had hoped for" was far from the manor of to-day, long the property of the Marquis de Lasteyrie (died 1926), who inherited the title and the estate through Virginia, the La Fayette's youngest daughter. True, its five towers continue to glisten with the ivy originally planted by Charles Fox; swans swim the lake, peacocks scream from the terrace: Pecavi! Pecavi! (I have sinned! I have sinned!); but gone is the drawbridge, dry the moat, while the interior is so Anglicised that there is not a trace of Adrienne's suite. As for the chapel, where she had profound peace, it is a granary.

Nothing to recall the love that filled her there entirely. For freedom was now given to consecrate herself in peace to the family affections that filled and dominated her soul. It was the only happiness she craved. "Had she not tasted to the full the pride and the grandeur of life; drunk to the dregs of its injustice, cruelty, hypocrisy, and malignant humiliations?"

Her family love continued inseparable from her lifelong solicitude for the poor. And while the General stocked the farm, planted the rose gardens, weeded vegetable patches and devoured Arthur Young, Agriculturist, she established on the estate Bureaux of Kindness, opened La Grange forests to the peasants, allowing them *gratis* all the wood they could gather for their daily needs.

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There were no anxieties as of old—how lonesome she must have felt! None until George, through her tireless intercession, was a commissioned officer of the French Army. In the best sense, he was mother's boy—her unfailing consolation. She had pride in his wound at the battle of Mincio—how far off the terror of his father's wound at Brandywine! Calmly she rejoiced when in Napoleon's Army George saved the life of his commanding general at the battle of Eylau. Her grief over Napoleon's thwarting of the boy's military career—"his hatred of the young officer was the talk of the army"—in face of his General's continuous recommendations for bravery, had its compensation in George's final retirement. To crown her cup of domestic bliss was his marriage, in the summer of 1802, to Emilie, the daughter of General Destutt de Tracy. "She seemed to perceive from the first day the happiness Emilie was to bring to both families," says Virginia.

After the marriage in Paris, gaily La Grange in carts—no berlin, no livery or outriders—was off with the bridal party to Chavaniac. Aunt Chavaniac, with every faculty preserved, continued to dominate the ancient fortress-château, as she had since earliest womanhood. How many lonely, heart-eating years had been hers since her Boy fled to America! And the *bon Dieu* had preserved her to re-welcome him home with *his* boy, reared to manhood at the Republican hearthstone of the American General she had not thought any too much of in pre-Revolutionary days!

Madame de Montagu loomed up at the wedding in a new rôle. For the nonce, the poor, and proselyting had a vacation. Her *métier* now was match-making. Visiting at Brive in Limousin, she had met a youth who, she confided to Adrienne, was the Prince Charming designed for



Virginia. "More admirable husband could not be desired," she declared. "Young, good looking, exceptional by his solid virtues and religious principles, he will be a son to your liking, *ma chère Adrienne*."

To Chavaniac she brought that summer Louis, the Marquis de Lasteyrie du Saillant, aged twenty-one. In the glamour of George's and Emilie's nuptials, the young folk met and Cupid gaily emptied his quiver. The Marquis followed the family back to La Grange where the marriage contract was witnessed and signed with the ritual denied Anastasie and her Comte Charles "unafraid of poverty."

Adrienne was favorably impressed by the young Marquis' "exterior advantages for she preferred handsome husbands for her daughters to one equally meritorious but less prepossessing."

The wedding set for February was deferred to mid-April for the General inconsiderately fell upon the ice in quitting the Ministry of Marines at Paris and seriously broke his thigh bone. He was taken to Madame de Tessé's house in rue d'Arjon Saint-Honoré. There two renowned surgeons almost tortured him to death by the first application of a new invention, which succeeded in slightly laming him for life. Adrienne summoned from La Grange was again on the wheel.

"Pray God," she wrote Père Carrichon, "we may not be on the cross." From a wheel chair in an adjoining room, the General witnessed the faithful Père tie the knot and impart the nuptial blessing.

Madame de Tessé gave Virginia—"rosy as an English girl"—her trousseau while the family, bereft of jewels, laces or diamonds presented the young couple with two thousand francs (100 louis). Twenty years before in Hôtel de Noailles, Madame de Montagu, it was recalled,

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took from her *corbeille du mariage*, eight thousand francs and distributed them among her servitors.

Adrienne and the General went with the bridal party to Aulnay, where in Madame de Tessé's rose gardens, sick and well, lovers old and young reveled in the miracle of spring's unfolding. Madame de Tessé's life at Aulnay was calmer and quieter than at Wittmold. Her dairies were as spacious but she no longer sold milk. There was scarcely enough for the guests that sought her from far and near. Every Sunday she went to mass in the village church and thither personally conducted her husband. Her conversations were as rich in idealism, force and gentleness as ever, but she was more lenient towards the devotees. In the presence of her young nephews she guarded against uttering a word that might disturb the faith of a child.

It seemed to Adrienne that great-hearted Aunt de Tessé had begun to understand and to feel that religion is also a philosophy as the word was then known. If a little philosophy swerves one from it, much philosophy brings one back to it. Whatever had been her mental uncertainties at life's heyday, with advancing age her soul felt the need to believe. If she still adhered to the political creed to which Gouverneur Morris flattered himself he had converted her, there was no evidence in her speech. Indeed, there is good reason to believe that even the mention of the ex-diplomat's name was by this time a family taboo. For while the La Fayette finances continued at a low ebb, Morris had betrayed a nervous anxiety over the repayment of the loan which he had made to Madame de La Fayette during the terrible days of the French Revolution.

Morris had come to a testy and crabbed old age. In the luxury of his Morrisania estate, with wealth assured,

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he had evidently brooded over the unsatisfactoriness of his efforts on behalf of the aristocracy. The La Fayettees had been cold to his aspirations, and it nettled him.

In writing to them he seems to have made frequent mention of this loan. Furthermore, he took pains to point out what extraordinary profits he might have made had he had the money to put into the excellent investments offered by the lustily expanding young America. His Paris agent was instructed to take up the matter with the La Fayette family.

The principal was 38,000 francs. It had been unhesitatingly given at a time when it was most desperately needed. It was a just debt, and one for which Adrienne could not but feel deeply grateful. But the manner in which it was called was painfully embarrassing. There survives a letter which she wrote to Morris about this affair.<sup>1</sup> It throws so much light on the transaction, and is in itself so rare a revelation of the gratitude, the politeness, and the fine irony that were hers that the whole is worth quoting:

Paris, May 29, 1802.

I am confident, my dear sir, that you will wish to share in our joy over the marriage of George, and I hasten to let you know of it. I am depending upon M. LeRoy to explain to you the details of a matter from which we hope for the happiness of our son. His wife will some day have a small fortune, and today has enough for the daily necessities. This is the extent of our ambition for our children, after we shall have paid off our debts.

M. LeRoy will tell you, my dear sir, that we have concluded with the government a transaction which gives M. de Lafayette

<sup>1</sup> This letter is in the La Fayette collection of Judge Walter P. Gardner of Jersey City, New Jersey, by whose kind permission it is reproduced here.



que les amis ont déjà répondu que le payement de ces  
dettes américaines seroit la première et la plus sensible  
obligation qu'ils pûrent leur avoir.

Il exerce lui-même à cet égard sur ma lettre envers vous, il  
en rappelle toutes les circonstances, et désireroit bien sincèrement  
que, les risques que vous avez courus en me prêtant, les marchés  
que vous pourriez faire avec l'argent que vous avez bien voulu  
me prêter dans ces affreux momens, entraîner dans les calculs  
du payement de ces Etats unis une si bonne de leur occu-

Mais comme M. de La Fayette, n'a rien ~~de~~ d'officiel  
sur ces objets, il desira de vous garder l'avantage de traiter  
avec des preuves plus riches que lui, et cependant de vous  
réserver pour l'acquiescement envers vous la somme effective  
que vous avez eu la bonté de me prêter, afin qu'elle puisse  
être à votre ordre, s'il falloit renoncer à l'emploi d'arranger  
les affaires par la bonté des Etats unis. Il s'engage donc  
à ne pas disposer de ces 5000<sup>l</sup> jusqu'à ce qu'il en ait  
l'approbation du Congrès —

Vous voyez nos motifs, mon cher Monsieur, Notre  
vœu le plus ardent est que vous jugiez les sentimens de  
nos cœurs et la vive juste et éternelle reconnaissance  
dont ils sont pénétrés pour vous —  
— noailles Lafayette

PORTION OF LETTER FROM MADAME DE LA FAYETTE  
TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

THE ORIGINAL OF THIS LETTER IS OWNED BY JUDGE WALTER P. GARDNER



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a few more resources for his purposes than he has had at his disposal for a long time. Assuredly he regards as personal in his accounts, the debt which I have contracted toward you, and it would have been a great satisfaction to him to pay, not only the cash equivalent of the sum which you were so generous as to lend me, not only the interest which you would have thought proper to add to it, but in addition the profits you would have been able to make out of this principal (according to what you have several times pointed out to me) by taking advantage of the unusual investment bargains which those times rendered possible. You have done us, my dear sir, such immense favors, I owe you so much gratitude, that I find it very painful to be adjusting a pecuniary claim with you.

But my husband's duties toward his creditors are sharply defined. He cannot profit by their handsome behaviour. And this is what it would mean if he were to charge himself with my debt, except to the agreed amount of its actual material value, i.e. the principal of 38,000 francs, the cash equivalent of the sum I received, which with accumulated interest at 5 per cent becomes about 53,000 francs. M. de Lafayette thinks that even this arrangement is permissible only under the condition that it releases us completely from all claim upon our common property, and my own in particular. If we had taken another manner of proceeding than our creditors would have wished, if indeed those who are still having to wait would not consent to an arrangement which leaves those who are deferred with a mortgage on my estate, the result would be not only ruin to us but a detriment to our creditors.

It has been by virtue of the exacting methods we have hitherto adopted, of taking advantage of the kind acts of our creditors, and even of discount granted by several, according to the extent of their debts, to be paid off-hand, either in money or lands, that we have been able to extinguish a large number of our debts and now hope to pay all. Any other arrangement will keep us far away from so desirable a goal.

Another important factor for us, preventing me from insisting that M. LeRoy end the matter immediately by accepting 53,000 francs, is that M. de Lafayette has received news through some



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friends which makes him hopeful that the United States will be kind enough to come to his aid. He knows that his friends have already stated that the payment of his American debts will be the first and the most pressing obligation that he owes to them.

He himself has written to these friends concerning my indebtedness to you. He recalls all the circumstances and heartily wishes that the risks which you ran in lending it to me, the good investments which you could have made with large profits when you chose to lend me this money in those terrible times, should all enter into the calculation as to payment, if the United States is kind enough to concern itself in the matter.

But as M. de La Fayette has heard nothing official on the subject, he desires for you the advantage of negotiating with persons richer than himself and nevertheless, to reserve, in order to satisfy you, the actual sum that you were kind enough to lend me, so that it will be ready upon your demand, if he is compelled to give up his hope of arranging his affairs through the kindness of the United States. He, therefore, binds himself not to dispose of this 53,000 francs until after the next session of Congress. You see our motives, my dear sir, our resolute promise, and may you judge (correctly) the sentiments of our hearts and the living, just and everlasting thanks that fills them for you.

NOAILLES LAFAYETTE

Primarily the man of business, Gouverneur Morris obviously remained one. Diplomacy and Samaritanism were the by-products of his European invasion. He considered the La Fayette's conduct in computing interest on the basis of assignats instead of gold now current, "indelicate and ungrateful" and the friendship of many trying years painfully ceased, as oft falls out when money intervenes either as a gift or a loan in interest of one's land or one's head.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### IN PERPETUITY

**L**A FAYETTE, we are here," made Picpus Cemetery known to the civilized world. Did the American General credited with voicing the cryptic salutation, the American Expeditionary Force and the French dignitaries who presumably heard it or the world that certainly re-echoed it, know to whom France owes its now famous God's Acre?

Madame de La Fayette's last work was the discovery and preservation of Picpus to the martyred victims of the Reign of Terror. For long the whereabouts of the bodies of the Duchesse d'Ayen and the Vicomtesse de Noailles had been the sisters' solicitude. With the family established at La Grange, Madame de La Fayette set about locating them. All Paris knew where they had perished, but their burial was a State secret. The press was discreetly silent. Before going to Chavaniac for George's wedding, she received the letter of an ecclesiastic stating that the burial place of the thirteen hundred victims of the last six weeks of the Reign of Terror was about to be located, but it was not until six months later that the site was definitely settled. Madame de Montagu, returning from Auvergne to Paris, accidentally learned that in an attic of a poor faubourg lived a Made-moiselle Paris who knew the burial place.

Up and down countless stairs, in and out the homes of the city's congested *quartiers* went Madame de Montagu—Adrienne was not equal to stair-climbing—until

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Mademoiselle Paris, lace-mender, was found. She had lived long at that address with her old father and brother, both of whom were guillotined; what for she never knew. On their failure to come home one evening at the usual time, she went in search and discovered them in a cortège of the condemned. Following the cortège to the Barrier du Trône, she witnessed their death. Together with the bodies of the other victims, she saw them thrown into the bloody tumbrils. She followed the gruesome procession, flanked by soldiers, until it reached Picpus. There it stopped. Through the falling night she recognized the ruins of the Augustinian monastery. There the corpses were dumped into a huge pit thirty feet square, specially prepared to receive the victims of each day's execution.

"They were actually buried in their own blood," said Mademoiselle Paris, robbed not only of her only kin but her livelihood, for who in devastated France had laces to mend?

Madame de La Fayette and her sister, under the guidance of the little lace-mender, made a pilgrimage the next day to Picpus and saw for the first time the cemetery then unknown to the city and little known to the neighborhood. They felt confident their sacrificed were in the same pit with the kin of the lace-mender. Would authority have troubled to transport the rest of the victims to a town cemetery?

Mademoiselle Paris' story tallied with Père Carichon's, which Adrienne had heard in the Delmas prison.

"As each head fell, it was thrown with the dressed body into a tumbril painted red," had said the saintly priest who shadowed the Duchesse d'Ayen and her companions to the guillotine, "and there all swam in blood."

In the neighborhood of the deserted monastery over whose wall Victor Hugo's Valjean climbed to safety, the



## IN PERPETUITY

sisters came upon the bottomless pit into which the bodies had been tossed pell-mell; no coffin, no winding sheet, no mark to enable families to recognize their dead and procure them fitting sepulchre.

Varied modes and places were used in carrying out the decrees of the Terror Tribunal. Barrier du Trône in Place Antoine was not erected until June, 1794. It had functioned six weeks when the fall of Robespierre ended its patriotism! In that short time—June 14 to July 27—more than thirteen hundred persons, the majority without trial and innocent of the accusation—notably Madame de La Fayette's kin—were guillotined.

The trial of the Duchesse d'Ayen demonstrated the travesty to which law and justice had come with the Revolutionary Tribunal. Called to the bench, the Noailles women were astounded to learn that the chief accusation against them was their conspiracy with Dillon—the General Dillon who bravely fought in America—in the Luxembourg to assassinate the Committee of Public Safety.

"Speak louder, please," said the Duchesse d'Ayen to the President of the Tribune, who accused her of being a party to the conspiracy. "I am deaf."

To the hilarious laughter of judge and jury, the President in exaggerated ironic voice said: "So, so, *Citoyenne*, you conspired *deafly*!"

"I was arrested," she replied when he made himself heard, "six weeks *after* Monsieur Dillon, accused of being chief of the Luxembourg conspirators, was guillotined."

"But you knew the Levi women?"

"I never *knew* them and I never *saw* them but *once* in prison."

"Silence," he cried. "Enough of that!"

To the jury he turned: "*Citoyen* jurors, you have heard

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the accused, of her own will, say that she knew the Levi women who were of the conspiracy and have carried their guilty heads to the guillotine."

Likewise were the other Noailles women questioned and sentenced. . . .

Madame de La Fayette, after the installation of the Directory, discovered that the field of the dead and the surrounding land had been sold. The purchaser was the Princesse de Hohenzollern. Without disclosing her purpose, the Princesse enclosed the site with a wall to protect it from profanation. She knew that her brother, the Prince de Salem-Kreyburg, General Vicomte de Beauharnais—the husband of Napoleon's Josephine—and other martyrs of July 22, 1794, to the number of fifty-three, were interred there.

Adrienne and Pauline, when first they beheld the uncultivated fields, the abandoned roads, the isolation of the site, were overcome with bitter sadness. The forgetfulness of the past! Its speed, its heartlessness! The tragic failure of one generation to profit by the errors of its predecessor!

In their whispered midnight sessions at Vianen, the sisters had planned to raise a monument to their mother. With the discovery of Picpus, the project vanished. One private monument—how inadequate to arouse the soul of the passerby to the "abomination of desolation" of this lonely spot!

"Let's purchase the garden of the Augustinians and merge the whole, with the consent of the Princesse de Hohenzollern, to a God's Acre in perpetuity," suggested Madame de La Fayette.

Unhappily, the time was far from propitious for its execution. The Catholic cult had scarcely ceased to be proscribed. In spite of Napoleon's *Concordat*, public

## IN PERPETUITY

administration offices were filled with the Revolution's old opponents. The sisters met oppositions from their closest friends. Fearful that they might arouse sleeping dogs, the wisest advisers endeavored to turn them from the project. Madame de La Fayette had endured too much, leveled too many Alps to be intimidated by intolerant officials. Only one obstacle phased her—the inadequacy of her income to accomplish so great a work.

"Open a subscription among the victims' kin," suggested Mademoiselle Paris, Labor's Daughter. "I'll give ten sous a week from my earnings until it is done."

Was the working girl's generous proposition spurned by the last of the old régime? Far from it. Heartened, they gratefully accepted it and forthwith opened a subscription.

Monsieur de Tally-Tollendal, former orator of the *Constituante*, drew up a touching prospectus. Then difficulties began to unfold and to multiply. To find the names of the victims and the whereabouts of their kin was a herculean task. The greater number were scattered throughout France; in exile, had lost their fortunes or were dependent upon charity. Illustrious names were mingled with the unknown, which included faithful domestics, such as the Noailles and the La Fayettees retained to their last day.

While Madame de La Fayette and Madame de Montagu were absorbed in locating the victims' kin, the owner of the ruined convent of Picpus built a chapel on the site of the one the Revolution of 1793 had destroyed. The chapel completed, the curé of the nearest parish, Abbé Bendot, said mass there every Sunday. He blessed the earth and planted a cross where the victims lay. In this zealous curé, Madame de La Fayette soon had a devoted co-laborer.



## ARDENT ADRIENNE

The first subscribers were readily secured in the Noailles family and its numerous collaterals. Modest were the monetary contributions of both Madame de La Fayette and Madame de Montagu, but incalculable their personal service, contributed in secret and at great sacrifice. For their aim was to efface themselves and to make the whole a testimonial of public mourning; and in this they succeeded, working through Abbé Bendot. To be lost in the crowd of subscribers, as were their grandmother, mother and sister in the nameless crowd of the dead, was their prayer.

The money they personally raised eventually bought the new chapel and the vast ruins that surrounded it. The garden which separated the ruined monastery in the sacred enclosure was at this time the property of another owner and not to be acquired until long after.

The chapel Madame de La Fayette's efforts secured has been long since replaced by the large and beautiful church one sees there to-day, "a little *sombre*, a little *triste*." The walls forming a cross on either side of the choir are inlaid with marble plaques inscribed with the names of the thirteen hundred and seven victims of Barrier du Trône officially registered in the Conciergerie. Daily, mass is said there in memory of the dead of the neighboring cemetery and for all whose dust the Revolution scattered.

Through Madame de La Fayette's solicitude, the Order of Perpetual Adoration was installed in a part of the old monastery, where it continues to function. Before the exposed Blessed Sacrament continuous prayers are offered for the victims and for all who have none to pray for them.

Frequently the Imperial Government threatened to close both church and cemetery, but it never did. In the

## IN PERPETUITY

section of Picpus reserved to descendants of the old noblesse, there has been no interment since 1876. And with the suppression of the religieuse in France (1906), the Perpetual Adoration ceased to be a contemplative order. To eke out a livelihood, the community conducts in the historic old site a *pension* for French conversation. Its largest clientèle—as Madame de La Fayette would have wished—is American.

## CHAPTER XL

### JOURNEY'S END

THE "courage, simplicity, serenity" with which Adrienne surmounted the devastating havoc of her forty-eight years continued to deceive the family until the summer of 1807. Early that spring she began to realize that her work was done. With realization came acute pain and a violent fever that rapidly assumed a form of suffering and a delirium beyond medical understanding or human alleviation. On October eleventh, she heard mass for the last time in the chapel of La Grange. In a surcease from pain she was transported to Aulnay, three miles from Paris, where Madame de Tessé had a château and lovely gardens. There the malady took so unexpected a turn—her whole body erupted in blisters and running sores—that she was hurried to the Tessé Paris hôtel in rue d'Anjou Saint-Honoré, one of the famous pre-Revolution salons.

General de La Fayette and George—the latter home that summer from Napoleon's army, from which he had resigned his commission—were summoned from Chavaniac. The family—sisters, daughters and grandchildren to the number of sixteen—gathered at Aunt de Tessé's for the last *réveil*.

"My condition mars your joys, but not one of mine is lessened," she said to Virginia and Emilie in one of pain's cruelest moments. And we can well believe, in that long-drawn-out passing, unparalleled perhaps outside fiction



## JOURNEY'S END

or the histrionic stage, Adrienne had, as in the prison of Olmütz, her supreme happiness.

She was with those she loved. Every time her eyes opened they rested upon a beloved; for one by one they came at intervals, until, to spare her the fatigue of searching for a missing face, all assembled the last day in a seated circle around the bed drawn to the center of the spacious chamber.

"What an agreeable circle," she said, complacently surveying them.

"Have you any idea of the maternal feeling?" she asked Anastasie in a lucid moment. "Do you enjoy it as I do? Is there anything sweeter, stronger, more intimate? Do you feel, as I do, the need to love and to be loved?"

La Fayette to his prison companion, Monsieur de La Tour-Maubourg, poured out in an astounding, revealing letter—detailed, complete as a stenographic report—the heart-rending havoc the reckless malady played with that uncommon mind, that intrepid soul, impervious in dissolution as in life's heyday to earth-bound lure.

The remarkable epistle—rather, *dossier*—written shortly after her passing, confirms what his generation suspected and not infrequently voiced. Gilbert Motier de La Fayette, like the rank and file of *homos*, never realized until she was no more how much his career was indebted to his wife's generous understanding of his weaknesses; her exalted sense of duty, her consuming passion for what she believed he was: the pre-destined liberator of the human race from worn-out bondages.

"I so habituated myself to all that she was for me that I cannot distinguish it from my own existence," he writes. . . . "I did well to love her, to have need of her, but it is not but in losing her that I have power to disintegrate

that which remains of me for the rest of a life in which there can neither be comfort nor happiness."

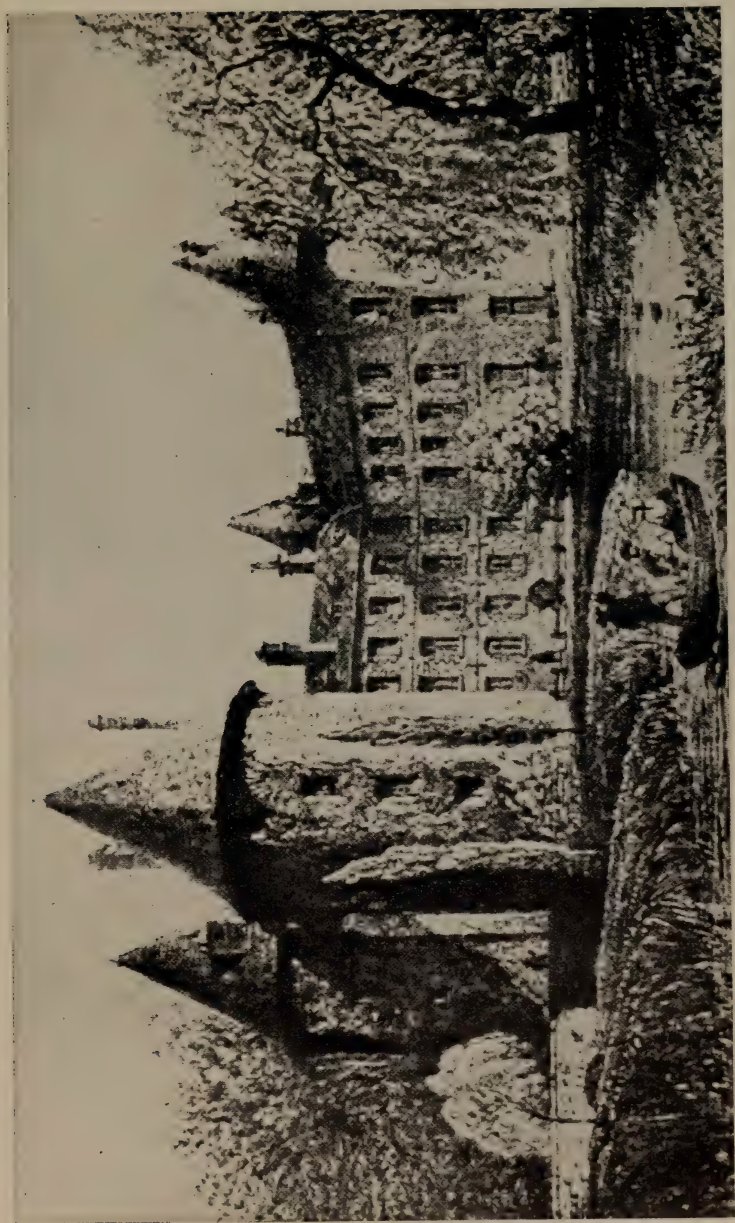
For the biographer this amazing epistle of *post mortem* summary clarifies two unrelated but tantalizingly mooted queries, intimated but nowhere admitted in family journals, correspondence or memoirs. Was La Fayette true to Adrienne? Was she resigned to his Deism?

As to the first, Virginia stresses her mother's lack of all jealous feeling. That the green-eyed monster is mentioned would indicate that were her mother given to entertaining the *mauvais mouvement* it engenders, she would not have lacked provocation. Obviously, the daughter was not unaware of the amours with which gossip spiced her father's youth. Evidently, she knew or suspected something of the truth of "the numerous infidelities of which he had been guilty"—to re-quote the Marquise de La Tour du Pin, "the cruel indifference with which he had always treated her, and only religion could have inspired her with the courage and resignation to endure."

Virginia was bent upon setting the situation aright; does she succeed?

Of the lovely Madame de Simiane, the outstanding *inamorata*, if countless chroniclers in and out of Court are to be credited, she tells us that Aunt Louise, the angelic Vicomtesse de Noailles, said "she was gay, delightful, charming, amiable, with an adorable heart, noble feelings and great good sense."

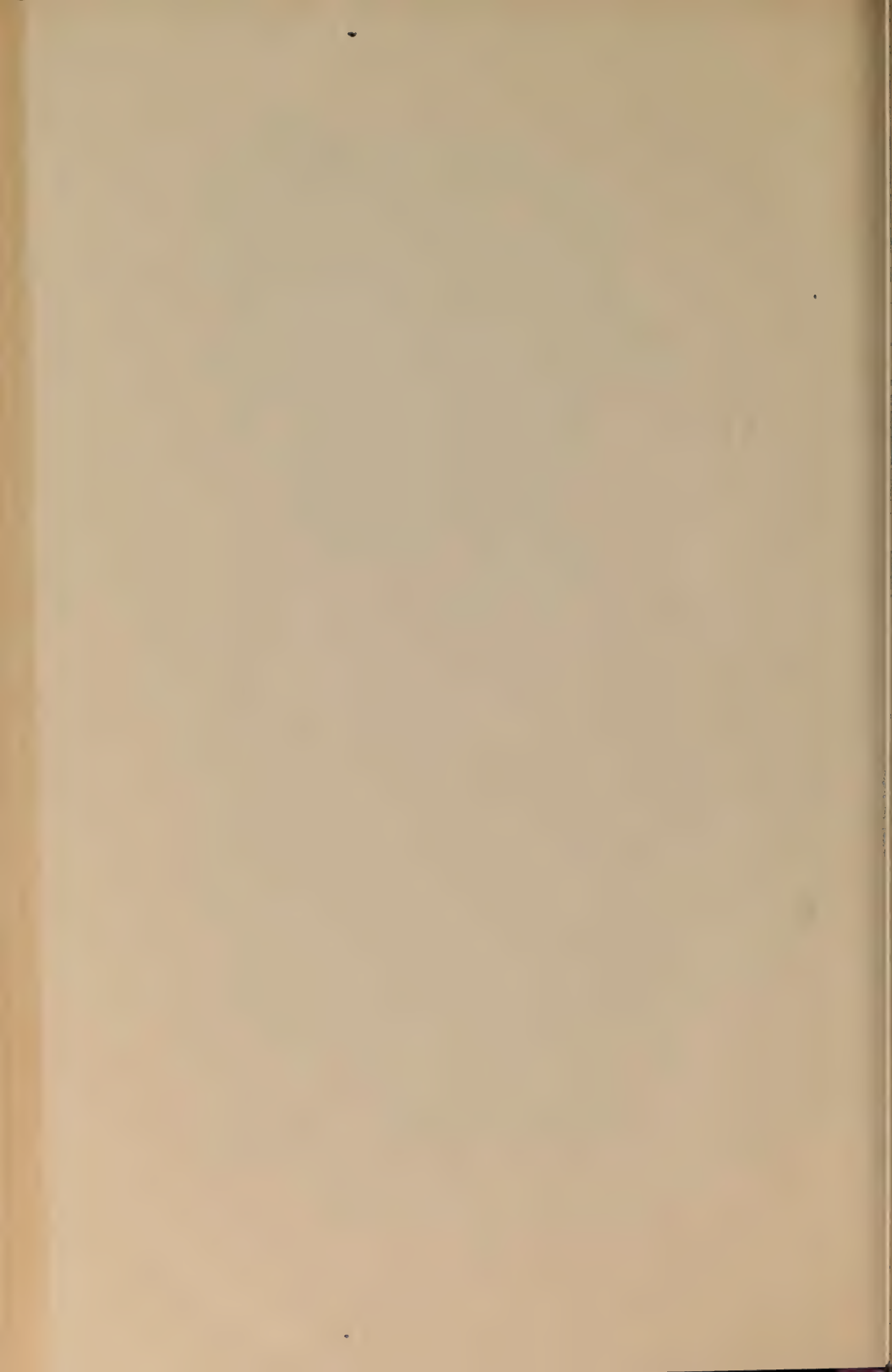
Significantly, the first *non-famille* invader of the sick chamber, as she was the first to pursue the exiles to Wittmold, was Madame de Simiane. In the Maubourg letter, hers is the first name La Fayette cites: "I have a malignant fever," Adrienne said to Madame de Simiane, "but I'll pull out of it." Sanguine Adrienne!



LA GRANGE, THE ANCESTRAL HOME OF ADRIENNE'S MOTHER, THE DUCHESE D'AYEN

FROM AN OLD PRINT





## JOURNEY'S END

More than malignant fever was the sum of the years' steady dissolution of the poisoned blood. "She could not be saved," writes La Fayette, "and so we had the sweetness to weep with her." But Adrienne did not weep. Her weeping days were over.

The household, knowing her unfailing graciousness to every charmer rumor associated with Gilbert's name, saw only consistency in her message—it was the last day of her life—to La Fayette: "When you see Mme. de Simiane give her a thousand caresses for me." For, as he adds to the man who perhaps above all others knew of his philandering, "*Her heart was like that all her life.*" Had it been otherwise, easy to deduce from his Valley Forge letter to the Vicomte de Noailles at Newport the increase of emotional torture that would have been hers: "I hope our mistresses will never be *exigent* enough to prevent our having a supper with the 'girls,' nor we stupid enough to break up a party by obedience," he wrote, declining his compatriot's supper invitation. "If I had a mistress, my sentiment would be founded partly on the delicacy of the pride that she should show by not being jealous, and on the liberty I should have to do *everything that I wished, even to neglect her, without ever finding her exigent.* That mistress then would attach me forever, at all events I think so, if not more by a violent passion, at least by the most tender attachment. . . . I do not like 'girls' because stupidity is a bore and impudence disgusting." . . .

Adrienne's delirium—it covered a month—was peculiar and in keeping with her often incomprehensible character. She wandered in Egypt and Syria with her family—including the guillotined. They were always Biblical characters or gods and goddesses of Greek mythology. "She feared troubles, persecutions, proscriptions, invasions, and she

prepared herself to meet them with the gentleness and the firmness with which she had met life's real emergencies." The dominant note of her delirium, however, was that of the rational mind: *God and La Fayette*.

"What he was to her," says Virginia, "is inconceivable. The effect his presence produced upon her, her choice of expression in revealing her tenderness for him with *more abandon than she had ever shown*; . . . her talk of God and religion, inexpressible to the rational mind, delirium convincingly revealed."

In the midst of the continuous disordered imagination, her passion for La Fayette remained fixed. "It was seemingly too deep to fade, stronger than the malady, invincible as death."

"Perhaps she was freer in expressing it," he writes Maubourg, "than if she had her reason. She would have felt obliged in normal state to suppress the sentiment which she said 'gave life to every fibre of her being.' 'How fervently I ought to thank God,' she once exclaimed, 'that my strongest passion has always been my duty!'"

La Fayette was not wholly unprepared for delirium's disclosure. For shortly before the final illness, Adrienne in full possession of her normal mind and with Eternity in sight, had broken through the reticence that had held her the thirty-four years of their union. She recalled to him the violence of her emotion upon his return from America the conquering hero. Her affright at the seeming invincible power of the passion that consumed her; her fear to embarrass him in public or bore him in private.

"I sought to moderate myself by a rigorous self-discipline. You ought not to be discontented with what is left of me."

With the increasing delirium of the disordered mind,



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the pent-up emotion that untold discipline had apparently atrophied suddenly burst the restraint of the vanished years. In facing death, of which she had no fear, the secret, haunting doubt of her stormy life was voiced.

Did he love her? Had he ever loved her?

During the last hour of agony and struggle [runs the letter] we were torn between expressing our tenderness, which she enjoyed so much, and the conviction that these emotions used up the little life left her. I withheld my words with as much care as my sobs, until the touching expression of her eyes tore from my lips the feelings that suffocated my heart. Her voice at once revived. "It is then *true*," she cried out, "You have loved me? Ah! how happy I am! Kiss me." Those poor almost lifeless arms came from under the sheet with a strength that startled me. She put them around my neck and pressed me to her heart. "What happiness! How happy I am to be yours."

Although she was attached to me, I can say it, by the most passionate feeling, never have I perceived in her the slightest shade of exaction, discontent or jealousy; never anything that did not leave the greatest freedom to my career, to all my enterprises, my absences, *all my affections*. "Her devotion," as Madame de Tessé once laughingly said, "was a mixture of the catechism and the Declaration of the Rights of Man." . . .

"If you do not find yourself loved enough," said she, "take God to task for not giving me greater faculty to love." At delirium's height she cried out: "I love you Christianly, mundanely, passionately." . . .

Madame de La Fayette's solicitude for the return of the "incomparable lover" to the Faith of his Fathers, never apparent in her daily life, nevertheless secretly dominated it, as it did openly her last hours.

"Never had she expressed to me anything but the hope that on more reflection, with the uprightness she recognized in me, I would end in being convinced."

## ARDENT ADRIENNE

Gilbert Motier de La Fayette, like all his forebears, was born, baptized and reared in the Roman Catholic faith. In *tempo* with the generation which preceded the French Revolution, in which the "flickering flame of Catholicism was so tiny," says Hilaire Belloc, "that it is difficult for the modern man to conceive it," young La Fayette flocked with the philosophers, agnostics, charlatans until his only religion was Liberty, Humanity.

The motive power of the age, as has been truly said, was "an asceticism without a religion to produce it, spiritualism without a belief in spirits, faith without a god."

"All the men I met in France attached to the higher classes or constituting them," wrote Arthur Young, traveling in pre-Revolution France, "were infidels." Evidently, like so many travellers of his kind, the famous English economist failed to encounter the submerged cream of the old noblesse.

La Fayette was easy prey to prevalent fads. He became so immersed in their sophistries that Louis XVI, who would have none of them, said to him on the eve of his departure to America in 1784: "What will your General Washington say when he learns that you are chief apothecary apprentice to Mesmer?" Indeed, so given were the last two decades of the eighteenth century to the occultism or "animal magnetism" of the miracle-working Mesmer and Cagliostro that Sainte-Beuve says it was common belief of the reformers that monarchical France could be mesmerized or hypnotized into a North American Republic.

How Adrienne soared above its skepticisms, the sacrilegious violations, the blasphemous distortions of Gospel precept! Soared fearlessly, but never spectacularly; ever bearing witness to the faith within her but never obtruding it or her pious practices upon scoffer or unbeliever!

## JOURNEY'S END

"During thirty-four years I have never had *for an instant* a shadow of trouble, as all her pious practices were subordinated without affectation to my conveniences," writes La Fayette. In all that time, did he suspect *for an instant* how deeply his apostasy, his pursuit of false gods "tore"—as had her passion for him—"the very fibre of her being"?

Never! Only the soul imbued as was Adrienne's with the true missionary spirit could comprehend her disquiet. His eternal happiness was as integral a part of her being as was her love for him.

"I have never seen her so deceived as during a moment or two of delirium when she persuaded herself I was become a fervent Christian," he writes Maubourg. "The deception was very fugitive and accompanied by doubts and questions that proved it was a *wish* less than an *illusion*."

"If I go into another world you may well believe that I shall be occupied with you," she said to him as the parish curé left her. "The sacrifice of my life will be very little, whatever it may cost me to quit you, if it assures your eternal happiness."

The day she received the last sacrament she put great store on my being present. "This life is short, troubled," she said, "let us reunite ourselves in God. Let us part together for eternity." Her religion was all love and confidence. She had fully practised it [had Maubourg need of assurance?]. She had no fear of hell. She did not believe in it for the good, the sincere, the noble of any creed. "I do not know what will happen to them at the moment of their death," she said, "but God will illumine them and will save them." The only Divine punishment she could understand was to be debarred from the sight of God. . . . How often you have heard me tease her about her amiable heresies! . . . She had that merit, so rare in pious people towards those who do not



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share their opinions, she could believe entirely in their goodness and recognize it without reserve. . . .

She prayed me to read, for the love of her, some books that I certainly will examine anew and with concentration. She called *her* religion—to make it taste better to me—the “Sovereign Liberty.” What pleasure she had in quoting Abbé Fauchet’s “Jesus Christ, my only Master”! . . . Ah, my friend, I have more need now than ever to believe that all does not die with us.

And what he read “for the love of her” not only strengthened that belief but brought him back to orthodox Christianity, practical Catholicism. But Adrienne was not to know. How drastically her religious practises were “subordinated without affectation to my convenience,” and the same subordination was imposed upon their children until it was become to them second nature, an incident of the last agony reveals.

“My daughters, attaching a value to certain prayers and indulgences and knowing that I was not in the habit of occupying myself with them, hesitated to say them in my presence, fearing it might annoy me.” Such filial consideration at a mortal crisis may well seem incredible to the modern Catholic. It could hardly have been possible to seventeenth century believers. But everything gave way to eighteenth century humanism!

How *exigent* the “incomparable lover” would have been had Adrienne been other than she was, the Maubourg letter confirms: “Some one asked me to leave the room so that Madame de Montagu [Pauline], who from the beginning had her confidence, might ask her if she had anything to say to her. At first I resented this request, tender and timid as it was. . . . I feared her last moments would be troubled. *I avow even my old conjugal affection had for the first time a jealous feeling.* It was my passionate need to occupy her *exclusively*. I wished

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*all* her glances, *all* her thoughts. . . . She maintained to the end that she did not suffer. 'I can believe it,' said the nurse; 'she is an angel.' "

"Never in a long practice," said the doctor, "have I seen anything approaching this admirable character; nothing to make me believe human nature could go so far."

Three times at delirium's peak she recited in a voice of surpassing strength—"I sing so badly," she apologized—the Canticle of Tobias. How the Canticle, like motif in Wagnerian opera, had recurred in her life's decisive moments!

Joyously she had sung it on her wedding day! It was the Duchesse's secret nuptial ritual for all her daughters. With tears of exaltation she had intoned it on sighting the towers of Olmütz; dreamily voiced it crossing Lake Ploen to Wittmold. With the increasing *fortissimo* of an orchestral finale it returned to emphasize and rhythmically round out her earthly exit.

The Christmas eve of 1807 was the twenty-eighth anniversary of the birth of George Washington de La Fayette—a fête the parents sacredly observed. That night to the chimes of Paris belfries "Peace and Goodwill to All Men," Adrienne, with her hand in La Fayette's, breathed her last words: "*Je suis toute à vous.*"—I am all yours.

## EPILOGUE

THE Monday after Christmas, 1807, Madame de La Fayette was interred, as she had requested, in Picpus Cemetery. She was the first Noailles to have certified burial there, for those who had preceded her were the unidentified victims of Barrier du Trône, buried in the adjoining field.

Life had habituated "Ardent Adrienne" to absences of the "incomparable lover." Death consistently held him from her twenty-seven years. Not until February, 1834, did he rest beside her, wearing around his neck, as he had since her passing, her miniature inscribed with her last words: "*Je suis toute à vous.*" And there the miniature remains, now ninety-six years (1834-1930) beside the dust of the original.

Five years before the World War, there were three American standards on General de La Fayette's grave: Sons of the American Revolution, Loyal Legion and La Fayette Post.

There was no standard upon the grave of Madame de La Fayette.

Where the alien worthier memorial in America's Capitol or New York's Hall of Fame?



## NOTE

**Y**EARS of desultory reading of eighteenth century France, and no little loitering in the footsteps of the La Fayettees went to the writing of this biography. Days and nights were spent in Château Chavaniac-La Fayette, the General's birthplace. La Grange, the ancestral home of the Duchesse d'Ayen, the mother of Adrienne de Noailles, and pilgrimages to Picpus Cemetery were of the itinerary.

At Château Chavaniac I was practically mistress of the ancient Auvergne fortress and had "right of way from turret to foundation stone." I slept two nights in the tower room in which the General was born; browsed in his mother's tiny suite where Adrienne lived and wrote her heart-breaking appeals to the Seats of the Mighty; knelt in the dismantled chapel in which she poured out her soul and was strengthened for the fray; ate in the breakfast room off the huge barrack-like kitchen lighted by a porthole that had served in feudal time for cannon holder.

The concierge born and bred in the Château assured me I was the first American in his time to sleep in the natal chamber, and to be accorded the unique and fascinating experience of unrestricted survey. For this priceless privilege I am indebted to the Marquis Gaston de La Fayette and his Marquise of English birth. The Marquis came into the title and estate in 1890 upon the death of the childless Senator Edmond de La Fayette, who had inherited it through Anastasie, the General's eldest daughter.

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The Marquis Gaston de La Fayette was guest of the Congress of the United States as representative of the La Fayette family at the Yorktown Centennial. In the World War he lost his only son—the third La Fayette descendant to make the supreme sacrifice in that unspeakable slaughter.

## AUTHORITIES

Of countless books read, consulted or assimilated, I found the following the most helpful:

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*La Vie de A. P. Dominique de Noailles, Marquise de Montagu*. Her journals, diaries and letters, ed. Aug. Callet (Paris, 1866, 1889).

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